

Harry Potter and the Poison Pen

Summary: Harry has had enough of seeing his reputation shredded in the Daily Prophet and decides to do something about it. Only he decides to embrace his Slytherin side to rectify matters.

Disclaimer: Harry Potter's cast and crew belong to JKR. Frau and I don't own them. However, if you don't recognize the character then it's a good shot that it's an original character that Frau and I created to help with the story. There will be some statistics that were created through artistic license. This full disclaimer will only appear on the first chapter and you will be directed to it often.

Pairings: There will be no pairings in this story as of right now and may be subject to change as the story unfolds. Reviews are welcomed, flames aren't. All suggestions will be taken under advisement and may or may not be used. –GF and Frau

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Chapter 1: Dear Editor

Daily Prophet Reporter Emily Anderson was walking into the office of the Editor-In-Chief, when a balled up bit of parchment went sailing past her.

"What's up Lord Charles? Another complaint?" The slender brunette asked as she bent to retrieve it. Unfolding it, she hummed as she read.

"Dear Editor,

I have been reading the Prophet all summer and I am confused. Are you a newspaper or a gossip rag? Do you enjoy printing articles that make no sense? Where is your professionalism and pride in reporting news accurately?

Why am I asking somewhat impertinent questions? Well, all this on going smear campaign against a teenager has me wondering. What are you and the Minister of Magic so afraid of? I mean, come on, Harry Potter is only fifteen years old. I see less negative news concerning He Who Must Not be Named than you print about Harry Potter.

Are you and the Minister that insecure? Where are the facts? The solid news reporting? All you are printing is hear-say and conjecture that runs the gamut of making a saint of Harry Potter to making him as reprehensible as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. You really can't have it both ways. Where in Merlin's name are you getting your information, or are you just making it up as you go? If that's the case, don't libel laws apply here? If you were writing about me, my parents would sue you! Just because Potter has no one to stand for him doesn't mean he's fair game. If you were to print half as much hearsay about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, you probably wouldn't have a paper to print.

Has anyone really asked Potter what his side of the story was? All you've reported was "Mr. Potter is unavailable for comment." That's the easy way out. Where are those that are reputed to be his associates and friends? Why haven't you interviewed them? Is the Ministry afraid of what they might say? Do you run your newspaper or does the Ministry? Is the term, 'a free press' a myth?

Well, as a student of Hogwarts, let me tell you something about my observations of Harry Potter. I have had some classes with Potter and let me tell you, the Potter you portray in your articles and the one I see around Hogwarts are totally different.

So please tell me, are you really printing the truth as a reputable newspaper is obligated to do? Or are you printing the truth according to the mandates of the Ministry?

As for the whole debate of whether He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is back or not, I'm neutral. This letter isn't about that but more about the misuse of the power of the press. I guess what I am asking is, are you printing the news necessary to keep your readers informed of current events, or are you pandering to the lower standards of the gossip mongers seeking their daily titillation.

I dare you to print this letter. If you don't, I'll know just how scared of the truth and the powers that be you really are.

Oliver Twist"

"You know, the kid has a point," she said, looking up at her boss.

Lord Charles Witherspoon the fourth, Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Prophet, snorted, "And if I printed that letter, Old Fudge would shut us down. We can't afford to antagonize him. Look, Anderson, I know that you spent two years over the pond, but I keep telling you, we run things differently here."

"Don't I know it!" she sighed, rolling her eyes. She'd had run ins with the stodgy minister before. "Well, can I keep this? I just may have an idea on how to answer this kid's questions and get us off the hook." She thought for a moment, rereading the letter. "Any chance this could be Potter, himself?"

Lord Charles shook his head. "By all accounts, Potter's a mediocre student with average intelligence. Which is strange in and of itself, as his parents were both exceptional wizards."

"Right, thanks Lord Charles. So who do you think wrote this?" She asked.

Lord Charles shrugged. "Twist isn't a pureblood name, so it was probably a muggle-born or half-blood with muggle ties."

'Idiot.' Emily rolled her eyes. She grinned to herself, 'then again maybe he's right, most purebloods don't seem to be able to think for themselves and few know their Dickens.' Walking back to her desk, she tapped the letter against the desktop thoughtfully. 'However, I know just the person that may want to see this.'

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Xeno Lovegood was busy working on his latest fact finding results on the sexual exploits of the Crumple Horned Snorkack, when there was a knock on his office door.

"Oh? Why good day Miss Anderson," Xeno said as he ushered the brunette reporter into his office. "How may I help you?"

"I have a letter that Lord Charles was reluctant to print and thought you might like to see it?"

Now Xeno Lovegood may appear eccentric to many, but the one thing he was good at was knowing a good story when he saw one. One of the reasons he started the Quibbler was to be able to print

the truth in its many forms as well as to be able to say what he wanted to without censorship.

As he read the letter, he lifted one eyebrow, then the other. 'My oh My,' he thought. 'This will set the kneazle among the puffskeins!'

"So the Prophet was asked the hard questions and reneged on their responsibility to the public," he chuckled.

Emily Anderson grinned. "I thought you might see it my way."

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Harry Potter was pissed with the Wizarding World in general and Dumbledore in particular. The headmaster, in his infinite wisdom, had decided that Harry would be safer with his relatives yet again this year.

'And Let's not forget good old Fudge, who refused to believe Voldemort was back. Yeah, right,' Harry thought as he glared at his locked bedroom door. It was, of course, locked on the outside with him inside. 'Then Dumbledore decided that it wasn't safe for me to get the news and canceled my 'scription to the Prophet. Way to go, Dumbledore! Let's keep the Golden Boy ignorant! It's not as if I need to know what's going on. After all, it's not as if I have a Dark Wanker out there who wants to kill me.'

A slow, evil grin appeared on Harry's face. Too bad the old arse hadn't realized he'd had found a way around all the restrictions. Before he left Hogwarts, the Golden Boy of Gryffindor pulled a tactic worthy of a Slytherin. He asked for help from the one being in Hogwarts that was loyal to him alone – Dobby. The house elf, now secretly bonded with him, would do anything to help his most favorite hero and master.

So this summer, when Harry wasn't working as a house elf himself, Dobby made sure that all of Harry's personal needs were met without the Ministry or Dumbledore finding out. It seemed that house elf magic was under the MoM's radar and not restricted by any wards.

When Dobby had used the hover charm in Harry's second year, he'd made it mimic Harry's magical signature, thus laying fault on Harry

for the deed. Now however, he was masking the magic he used at Privet Drive for which Harry was eternally thankful. Harry hadn't missed a meal since he left Hogwarts and Dobby helped with his many chores around the house as well. His relatives weren't even aware of Dobby's presence, much to Harry's relief.

Harry now had a way to get the news and to communicate when he chose. So what if he was a semi-prisoner living in one room, if one could call it living, in the same house with three very magic-phobic muggles. With Dobby's help, Harry was able to come and go as he pleased and no one, magical or muggle, was the wiser.

"Master Harry Potter, sir," came a high-pitched squeak near his waist.

Harry smiled as he looked up from doing his potions homework. Another thing he had to thank Dobby for; strange how things didn't seem to stay in a locked trunk when there was a house elf around. "Yes, Dobby?"

"The newsy didn't print your letter. They've did send a reply."

"Oh?" Harry took the newspaper and scanned it. A slow grin formed as he read. "This is perfect!"

A small advert in the editorials read: "To Oliver Twist. We have taken your questions under advisement. We hear that the Quibbler is looking for interesting articles like yours, therefore we forwarded it on to their staff. —the editorial staff of the Daily Prophet."

"Dobby, I need you to get a subscription to the Quibbler for me, under the name of Oliver Twist. Have it delivered to my private post box for now. I'll set something up with the Goblins in the future," Harry ordered, setting the newspaper aside.

"Dumbledore is watching your mail still?" Dobby asked, wringing his fingers.

Harry sighed and nodded. "He's even keeping Hedwig at Hogwarts. Says it isn't safe for her to travel."

"Dumbledore is being bad, Master Harry Sir."

"That's why I had you set up the post box. You still have the key to it?"

Dobby's head bobbed rapidly. "Yessir, Master Harry, sir. Dobby keeps it safe."

Harry grinned. "Perfect."

Ever since Primary School, the young wizard had hidden his true nature and potential from the world. The Dursleys hadn't liked him out-shining their precious Dudders, so Harry had to go underground as it were. It so happened that Dudley and his gang had an allergic reaction to libraries and books which made them Harry's favorite hide-outs. So books became the friends Dudders denied him.

Of course, when he finally thought he was free from such oppression, he found he was just as trapped by the Wizarding World's perception of him. So Harry decided to keep his true talents hidden from them as well.

He didn't think either Hermione or Ron knew how intelligent he really was and as much as he loved his friends, he couldn't let them know. Hermione prided herself on her knowledge and being first, he knew she would resent him doing better than her. Ron, on the other hand, was a jealous prat to start with and wanted nothing more than to goof-off. So Harry decided to use Ron's level of ability as a gauge to go by and avoid conflict.

So what if he turned in mediocre essays, what did it matter in the long run? He wasn't sure that he would live to be an adult, all things considered. Between Dumbledore's asinine testing of Harry's self-preservation skills, Snape's hostility and old Tom's determination to kill him, Harry's life span didn't look to be too long or too pleasant!

That's why he wrote to the Prophet. He was tired of that gossip rag dragging his reputation through the mud. If he was an adult, he would be suing the rag for libel. He was not as stupid as people thought, he knew if he had signed his own name, he would have everyone under the sun jumping down his throat for such cheek. Thus proving the Prophet right in the eyes of the Wizarding World.

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Emily smiled as she read the next issue of the Quibbler. Oliver Twist's letter appeared as a front page editorial. Xeno Lovegood printed the teen's letter word for word and his answer was priceless.

"Dear Mr. Twist,

Unfortunately, our esteemed competitor, The Daily Prophet declined to print your letter for reasons of their own. Only they can reply to your probing questions, I am afraid I can not speak for them.

However, I am more than happy to try to address the more intriguing questions. I may fail to address them fully, but I will try.

Truth, I am afraid is a relative term in the Wizarding World. One man's truth is, sadly, another man's lie. The Prophet must cater to authority, while I cater to those who seek the truth. Although, my reader base is fewer, I hope they are more open minded.

Your comments about Harry Potter mirror those of my daughter's, who it so happens is a year behind him at Hogwarts. According to her, Harry Potter cares more for Quidditch and his friends' safety than calling attention to himself. If anything, Mr. Potter tends to try to hide from the crowd rather than seek attention for himself.

As far as I know, we of the press corps, have been asked not to seek out Mr. Potter as he is currently enjoying the summer with his family. So unless we hear directly from him, we have no recourse but to say, "Mr. Potter is unavailable for comment at this time," for it is true.

Only in America can you find true freedom of the press. As I understand it, it is one of the many basic privileges guaranteed by the laws of their land. I will have to look into it but I think the Prophet is a privately sponsored newspaper and must therefore answer to their sponsors. If the sponsors have no objections to what is written, then you can be assured it will appear on their pages.

Your questions, Mr. Twist, come at a time when we must review many of our beliefs and loyalties. I hope I have answered a few of them to your satisfaction. If not, I would invite you to write back and institute a dialogue between us.

Xeno Lovegood

Editor-In-Chief

The Quibbler"

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Chapter 2: First Blood

Emily Anderson stood outside Lord Charles' office door, glaring at the two burly aurors standing guard who refusing her entry. Behind the closed office door, she heard the raised voices of the minister and Lord Charles as well as a girlish, simpering voice that literally dripped malice.

Suddenly, the door flew open and Minister Fudge and and a disgustingly toad-like woman stormed out. "You will find out who leaked that letter to the Quibbler, Witherspoon or I will have your job. I know of several who would jump at the chance!" Fudge threatened, jamming a green bowler on his head.

Emily was given a curt nod by the aurors as she slipped past them into Lord Charles' office. She found her employer downing a calming draught with a fire whiskey chaser. "What in Merlin's name was that all about?" she queried.

He waved for her to close the door and take a seat. He pulled out his wand and cast a few spells. From what she could see they were anti-spy and silencing spells.

"Well, Miss Anderson," Charles said. "It seems our esteemed minister did not like the fact that someone had the audacity to challenge what is said in the Prophet. When I told him that I had thrown away the letter and that someone must have retrieved it, let's say he wasn't too pleased."

Emily sighed and lowered her chin. "So that means I need to find a new position?"

"Not by any means," he reassured her. "You are one of my best reporters. However, I would steer clear of Skeeter. She's Fudge's favorite muck raker and toady. She'll nail you, as well as me, to the wall if she can."

"Gotcha! So now what?"

Lord Charles winked. "Business as usual, Anderson. Business as usual."

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Harry Potter smirked as he read the Quibbler's response to his letter. He was quite pleased with it as it helped explain a few things. So the Prophet had 'sponsors'. Hmm. He wondered who they were besides the Ministry. Sitting down at his desk, he wrote two letters. The first was to the goblins. Harry would've liked to pay them a visit, but wasn't sure if he could manage it as he was still a prisoner in his relative's house. He refused to call this place his 'home', no matter what the delusional headmaster said.

Harry smiled as he reread the letter to the Goblins. Setting it aside, he looked at the empty perch and cage in the corner. His smile turned to anger. Dumbledore had no right to take Hedwig away from him. No right, at all! It also didn't help that he had as of yet to receive any letters from his friends. He would have thought Hermione at least would find another means to contact him. They had after all, exchanged addresses and phone numbers.

Shaking his head, he reached for another bit of parchment and started to write.

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Xeno Lovegood was enjoying his second cup of tea as he read the reader responses to Mr. Twist's letter. Many were good, some were irate and more than a few were howlers. However, howlers weren't allowed in the Lovegood home as it upset Luna. Those were redirected to a chute leading to an underground chamber where they could explode and no one need ever hear them.

A few, he mused, took what was said in the Prophet with a grain of salt, but most revered it as the literal voice of a prophet. 'More fools they,' he thought.

He even received a visit from a Ministry flunky by the name of Percy Weasley. Xeno shook his head. The boy was clearly infested with nargles if he thought the Ministry could dictate what went in the Quibbler! There were only two major stock holders, himself and one other and neither were willing to sell their shares.

Xeno stood with a sigh, "Well tea time is over. Back to work."

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Albus Dumbledore prided himself on being a wizard of great wisdom and integrity. He wanted Harry to have time to recover from the harrowing ordeal of seeing Tom come back last spring which was why he was tucked safely away with his relatives. Too bad it wasn't safe to correspond with his little friends, as it would've brought great comfort to the boy. Ah well, it's for the Greater Good, after all.

He started to take a sip of his tea as he picked up the Quibbler, his favorite newspaper. Scanning the letter to the Editor quickly, the aged wizard spewed his tea. What in Merlin's name?

He read then reread the letter and Xeno's response. Granted the man hedged his comments about the Prophet, but even he could read between the lines and see that Xeno Lovegood had no respect for the Ministry controlled rag.

This Twist lad sounded very angry at the world and at the Prophet especially. What was the boy playing at? Daring the Prophet and the Ministry to answer him?

Could the boy be correct in his views about Harry? Granted he wasn't too specific in his details, however, did he really know Harry? Could this have been written by Harry? No. The boy had no way to send anything to the Prophet. Hedwig was being taken care of by Hagrid. Who could this Oliver Twist be? Why did that name sound familiar?

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In a dark room with only a rat-faced man for company, a snake-like man was recovering from his rebirth.

The rat-faced man picked up the Prophet and started to read it aloud. Neither wizard read the personal section for the Prophet. So the personal noticed listed there to a 'Mr. Oliver Twist' went unread. Since neither read the Quibbler, they would not understand the notice since they hadn't read the original letter.

As for the other followers, no one felt it wise to inform their master of the letter as it was considered far too dangerous to call his attention to it.

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Gringotts' Director, Ragnok, picked up the letter addressed to Family Accounts Department and scanned it quickly.

"To Whom It May Concern,

I, Harry James Potter, son of James and Lily Potter, wish to know who my account manager is. I would like a copy of all my bank statements from the time my parents were killed to present time. I know I am under age but as I will be seventeen in a couple more years, I would like to learn how to manage my own affairs.

Second, I would like to learn about the 'sponsors' that govern the Daily Prophet. I want to know who owns the Prophet. What is written in their charter, who is on their board of directors and their last fiscal report.

Third, I would like a good recommendation for a Barrister. I have a feeling that my rights in the Wizarding World are being denied.

Lastly, my mail is being withheld from me by my Headmaster Albus Dumbledore against my wishes. Therefore I have rented a post box that is maintained by a house elf. I expect that all my business and all contacts with your esteemed establishment will be held in the strictest confidence. Therefore, any correspondence will be forwarded to my post box and not delivered by owl. The post box is under the name of 'Oliver Twist.'

May Your Gold Always Flow and Together May We Gain Much Profit

Harry J. Potter."

Pinching his nose and closing his eyes, the ancient goblin started to swear in gobblygook. Lord Potter should have been receiving bank statements since he was eleven. If he hadn't, where had they gone? This will bear investigation. Heads will roll if he discovers any fraud!

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Harry was sitting on his bed, reading a book on Wizarding etiquette and customs Dobby got for him. Something Dumbledore should've

given him years ago. He snorted. Yea right, the old coot! Doing anything that made Harry's life easier? Fat chance.

It was only by accident that Harry found out the senile old wanker had canceled the mandatory lessons on Wizarding Customs for all muggle-born students Harry's first year. Professor McGonagall had taught her muggle-born lions on the sly without him knowing. Harry only found out when he heard Dean and Seamus speaking about it in the showers. They hadn't known Harry was in another nearby stall.

It made Harry wonder what game ol' Dumbledore was really playing at? Why did the headmaster find it necessary to keep him in ignorance of the world he had been born into? It was a good thing that Harry was very adept at hiding his intelligence or he could've really been screwed.

Dobby popped in with a stack of mail. "Master Harry, sir. Your book order is done. I've picked it up for you. Also, the Goblins sent you an important letter and forms to fill out."

"Thank you Dobby," Harry said, taking the mail. Opening the Gringott letter first, he scanned the cover letter first. 'What the f. . .!' He thought.

"Unto the Heir to the Ancient and Noble Houses of Potter and Gryffindor; Harry James Potter-Gryffindor,
Greetings from Ragnok, Director of Gringotts,

Lord Potter, I will admit that your letter came as an unpleasant surprise. We have been sending you statements since you were eleven. Also we have been sending out requests for a meeting to discuss your future for some time. It has never come to our attention that you were not receiving them. We assumed that your guardian, Albus Dumbledore, had been passing on the information and you were allowing him to handle your affairs.

As per your letter, we have decided this is not the case. Pending an investigation, all of your accounts have been frozen. All keys have been recalled. If you have need for funds, you will have to appear at Gringotts for a meeting as your family's previous account adviser has met with an untimely death. I will be assuming the role myself until such time as we can come to a mutually agreeable arrangement.

As for the Prophet, as of noon yesterday, you are the major stock holder with sixty-eight percent of the shares. Ministry of Magic holds about twenty shares and the rest is owned by the Prophet themselves. The board of directors was appointed by the Ministry after the first fall of the Dark Lord Voldemort. The Ministry currently controls the Prophet through political intimidation.

Lord Charles Witherspoon, the fourth is the current Editor-In-Chief. He was hired by your grandfather, Lord Harold Potter. Lord Witherspoon is a good man, but since the death of your grandfather, his hands have been tied by the Ministry.

Lastly, your family has long retained the services of Lord Peter Flinchly-Addams as their barrister-at-law. We have notified him of your request and he will be contacting you soon. It appears that Headmaster Albus Dumbledore had informed the venerable barrister that his services were not needed as he, as the Supreme Mugwump, would be over seeing your affairs. Lord Flinchly-Addams is most anxious to speak with you.

We, at Gringotts, were deeply saddened by the death of your parents, Lord Potter. They were esteemed and valued patrons as well as honorable warriors.

Rest assured that we believe you when you said that the Dark Lord has returned. We will do everything in our power to assist you in your battles.

We need to speak soon.

May Your Gold Always Flow and Together We Will Make Much Profit

Ragnok
Director of Gringotts
Potter Account Manager"

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Well, here is chapter 2. Thank you all for the wonderful reviews. This story is almost finished in draft form. There will be around 30+ chapters all told. This was Frau's and mine contribution to NaNoWr.

I don't have my notes handy to tell you how many words Poison Pen ended up having as we also did a couple of chapters of our Narnia crossover, a chapter of What's Said is Said and a MASH one-shot.

Th final count was over 50,000 words all told. I was quite pleased. Frau was ill but now she's better. Thanks for everyone's concern. She and I will be trying to put out a chapter of Poison Pen a week and still work on finishing the others.

Until Next Time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 3: Truth takes a Back Seat

Arthur Weasley, head of the Weasley clan, stepped out of the courtroom with a very pale Harry Potter. It had been a grueling hour and a half for both. Fortunately for Harry, the Wizengamot had found the boy innocent of using underage magic to chase two dementors away from himself and his muggle cousin. It had been a near thing.

Albus Dumbledore saved the day at the trial and then promptly left, leaving Arthur to take care of the traumatized young wizard. The tall red-head was perplexed with the elderly wizard's cavalier attitude towards the distraught boy.

Why had Albus left in such a hurry? And why didn't the man look at Harry, greet him, or comfort him? He was sure Albus had his reasons, but not explaining them had left young Harry bereft and shaken.

"Wait! Mr. Potter? A moment of your time?" A stately elderly wizard strolled up, holding a cane in the air to draw their attention. The man was well dressed and carrying a briefcase in his left hand.

"Sorry no autographs," Arthur started to say, ushering Harry towards the exit.

"I should hope not," said the elderly gentleman, pulling out a card. "I am Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams. Retainer for the Potter family for many years."

Harry took the proffered card and looked it over. "Why are you just now approaching me?" he asked, confused.

"My apologies, Mr. Potter. I was unable to attend your trial. It would seem someone in the Ministry owed me the incorrect time and place," the distinguished wizard complained disdainfully. "For which I wish to offer my sincerest apologies, Mr. Potter. I can assure you no one in my office would make such a reprehensible blunder."

Arthur looked at Harry who was fingering the business card. Both were thinking that having a barrister earlier would have helped tremendously in Harry's defense.

Leaning closer, the silver-haired gentleman placed a hand on Harry's shoulder. "Could I have a moment of Mr. Potter's time in private?"

"Now see here!" Arthur sputtered, recognizing the wizard was one of the top Barrister of the Wizarding World. This regal wizard was not someone to offend. However, he had his orders from Albus. "I need to get Harry back to the Burrow. Molly and the others are waiting for us. . ."

"This will only take a few moments, sir," the barrister reassured, glancing at the teen.

"I don't see what it would hurt, do you Mr. Weasley?" Harry asked, turning to the gentleman in question. "You aren't a Death Eater are you?"

Lord Peter smiled, raised his cane and invoked an oath, "I, Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams, do swear on my magic that I am not now nor ever will I be a follower of the Dark Lord Voldemort. Yes, I too can say his name. I am who I claim to be, a Barrister-At-Law and a personal retainer to the Potter Family. So mote It be."

"So mote It be," Harry repeated and smiled as magic swirled around them sealing the oath. Turning to Mr. Weasley, he pleaded. "I would like to hear what he has to say."

Arthur sighed but nodded. "Very well, Harry but I have to stay with you. Albus and Molly would have my head if anything happened to you."

"If I may," Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams interjected. "Headmaster Dumbledore has refused me access to Mr. Potter since his parents were killed." He ushered them into an empty nearby conference room. "Further more, he has repeatedly denied all my requests to meet with him since his return to the Wizarding World at age eleven. I can assure you both, what I have to say is very important."

A stunned Arthur complied silently as the door closed behind them.

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Harry was delighted. Finally, someone would be on his side. The brief meeting went well. He could tell that Mr. Weasley was overwhelmed by it all. Thankfully, Lord Peter was able to get a wizard's oath from Mr. Weasley. Lord Peter had insisted on the oath to protect his client's rights to privacy.

Harry and Lord Peter couldn't go into great detail on past family business with Mr. Weasley present, but it was a start. Lord Peter was appalled that Harry had been kept in the dark about his rights and status in the Wizarding World.

Later that night at the Burrow, while Ron was sleeping, Harry was able to write a quick note to Lord Peter about how to contact him without using an owl. It wouldn't do for anyone to intercept any of their correspondence. It was unfortunate that he couldn't tell the barrister everything he wanted to with Mr. Weasley listening in.

He instructed Dobby, now that he was back in the Wizarding World, that any mail addressed to Oliver Twist should be placed in a new envelope and re-addressed to Harry Potter before it was delivered. It just wouldn't do to have Harry Potter to accepting mail addressed to Oliver Twist. Dobby was also instructed to make sure that Harry's magic signature could not be traced on any out-going mail as a precaution.

Setting up a date with the Goblins would be tricky. He was sure that he would not be allowed to go to Diagon Alley alone. Maybe if he asked Mr. Weasley if he could accompany him? No, Mrs. Weasley and Dumbledore would not allow it. Maybe if he asked the Goblins for a solution?

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Ragnok tapped the letter he had just received from Mr. Potter. The meeting between him and Lord Flinchly-Addams went well but had been supervised by a third party. Mr. Potter expressed his regrets about missing the meeting between him and the goblins as someone from the Ministry sent two rogue dementors after him and his muggle cousin. Now Mr. Potter would be watched constantly and have no way to get free of his watchers.

A slow smile formed on the ancient goblin's face. There was one way to fix that. Quickly he wrote out his orders and a letter to Gringott's most valued customer. That done, he sat back and waited.

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That next evening Dobby slipped Ron a sleeping draught that the Goblins had provided. Once Ron was safely asleep and the house quiet for the night, Harry took out the port-key and whispered, "Profit." Since the third task, Harry had been a bit squeamish about using a port-key but he'd been reassured that this one was to Gringotts and nowhere else. Harry trusted the goblins more than he did almost anyone else.

Landing unceremoniously in a heap at the feet of two goblin guards, Harry swore under his breath. The guards grinned at the young wizard before helping him up. "Mr. Potter?" one of them asked.

"That's me," Harry said, dusting himself off. "I have a meeting with Director Ragnok."

The meeting lasted an hour and a half. Harry and the goblins agreed they couldn't take the chance for him to be missing longer than that. Both he and Ragnok had a list of items that needed to be worked out. They were both pleased with the outcome. Nothing was fully solved as it would take more than just an hour to go through everything, but they at least had a good start.

Harry was pleased to note that Dumbledore had kept his fingers out of the Potter accounts, even if he was receiving Harry's bank statements. Gringotts had sent a letter to the elderly wizard that all keys and bank statements were being recalled due to irregularities. The ancient wizard had sent a reply that he was agreeable with this arrangement and to let him know when he could expect the problem to be resolved.

Harry smirked, placing the Potter heirs ring on his left hand. "How long can you stall?" he asked as he watched the ring become invisible.

"For as long as you need, Lord Potter," Ragnok replied with an equally evil smirk. "By the way, Lord Potter, your ring will remain invisible until you wish otherwise."

Harry returned to the Burrow with no one the wiser. Not sleepy yet, he sat down at Ron's desk and started to write another letter.

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Xeno Lovegood was looking over the Prophet's perspective on the farce known as the 'Trial of Harry Potter' when an owl delivered a letter.

Dear Mr. Lovegood,

Thank you for answering my questions when it appeared that the Daily Prophet refused to do so. I really appreciate the answers you gave about truth in reporting. I had never looked at it in that light before.

You were right about truth and lies. Take what happened to Harry Potter recently. I read the trial account in the Prophet and it had me wondering about a few things. So I went to my father's barrister. He said if I really wanted to know more about it, he would try to get a copy of the trial transcript. So I said yes, I was interested and he did. Did you know once a trial is over, it becomes public domain? Unless sealed by the Ministry anyone can receive a copy.

The question I wondered was why didn't they use Veritaserum to get at the truth? Or a pensieve? I mean they were trying Potter as an adult after all according to the Prophet, even though he is only 15! Last I knew 15 was still considered a minor.

Then too there is the fact that the Ministry changed the time and place of Potter's trial at the last minute. After which they failed to notify the defendant of the changes! Was the Ministry trying to get Potter convicted without even being there to defend himself? Where was due notice? Why didn't Potter have legal counsel? Has any one other than Potter ever been tried as an adult for underage magic without the benefit of counsel before?

As you can see, I have serious doubts about our legal system in the Wizarding World. Is the Ministry that dictatorial when it comes to the rights of an underage wizard?

And lastly, where were Potter's guardians in all this, why weren't they at the trial? According to the transcript, no one spoke up for Potter, that is until the Headmaster arrived with a squib witness.

Is this lack of concern for the rights and well-being of a magical child typical of the Wizarding World of Britain?

Could you set me straight on this? Enclosed is a copy of the trial transcript that the Ministry sent me, maybe you can point out the wisdom of our judicial system that I am missing.

Sincerely,

Oliver Twist

Xeno read the letter and then took out the parchment scroll that had the official seal of the Ministry. The next hour he went through the transcript and shuddered. He always knew that Fudge was an arse and a fool but this was completely over the top! The man has a political death wish and Oliver Twist along with raising several very interesting questions, has hammered the first nail into Fudge's coffin.

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Dobby popped in as Harry was just finishing his shower. A week at the Burrow had left Harry wishing for the quiet of the Dursleys. Well, almost wishing. Harry hadn't had much privacy and it was hard trying to keep Dobby a secret along with his many projects. Oh well, he did want a challenge after all.

Dobby handed Harry his copy of the Quibbler. Harry flipped through it. He hoped that his letter was there and it was. His jaw dropped as he read the response. However, he was more amazed that the trial transcript had also been printed in its entirety! Something the Prophet hadn't dared.

Dear Mr. Twist,

I am gratified to see someone of your young(?) years taking an interest in politics. You are right in that trial transcripts are public domain, unless sealed by the Ministry and they may only be sealed when questions of public safety arise. I must say reading young Mr.

Potter's trial transcript was a lesson in what is wrong with our legal system.

You are correct that veritaserum and/or a pensieve would've saved everyone time and energy.

I am also surprised that a mistrial wasn't declared, as you have pointed out, Mr. Potter wasn't represented by legal counsel. Having Albus Dumbledore speaking on his behalf was not a suitable substitute for legal counsel. It makes me glad I went into journalism.

As for the dementors, I too would like to know how two of them made it to Mr. Potter's muggle home without the Ministry being aware of their movements. They are after all, restricted to Azkaban and under Ministry control. To my knowledge, they are not permitted to leave the island without Ministry approval.

It is obvious from what I read that it was a clear case of self defense on Mr. Potter's part. I have looked into the laws governing underage use of magic and there is a clause that states that an underage wizard or witch can use magic in self-defense when their life is threatened, which was clearly the case here. The unfortunate aspect was Mr. Potter did it in front of his muggle cousin, clearly against the law. However, a good barrister would have argued that Mr. Potter's muggle cousin already knew about magic and Mr. Potter is therefore exempt from that law.

If Mr Potter so chooses to pursue the matter, a good barrister has a solid case against the Ministry's lack of control over their dementors and for trying him as an adult.

As for guardianship, I am afraid Mr. Potter's files have been sealed since the day his parents were killed. No one knows who his magical guardian is, and I can almost bet that Mr. Potter doesn't know either from what I could ascertain. Since they would've protested his treatment last year at Hogwarts, when he, as a minor, was forced into a magical contract against his will.

Lastly, I must caution you, my young reader. The ministry is very quick to sue any they feel who have libelous intent against them. However, they would not be wise to set such a precedent.

Although I have enjoyed the questions you raise, I am sure the Ministry does not.

So take care, my young friend.

Xeno Lovergood
Editor-In-Chief

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As someone mentioned, that chapter one was chopped off too quickly, Frau and I wanted to end that chapter and this with an Oliver column.

We want to thank everyone that has reviewed. We try to answer them privately, if you feel you want to start a dialogue about anything we write, feel free to comment on Genkai's yahoo group. The url is found on her profile.

Until next time. –GF

Chapter 4: Damage Control

The Leaky Cauldron was having a slow day. Xeno Lovegood had just dropped off the twenty-five copies of this week's Quibbler. Tom picked up his complimentary copy and looked it over. Ol' Lovegood was a decent chap in the old bartender's opinion, if a bit mental as it were.

Flipping through, his eyes caught the strange letter to the editor, then they widened. 'What 'n Merlin's name?'

"Hold'er down, Mel. Got ta run ta the Ministry," Tom called as he whipped off his apron.

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Xeno lovegood was well pleased with this week's issue of the Quibbler. Granted, his subscription rate had risen by some 200 more copies than last week. That just meant more work for him, but it was worth it. He had to thank Oliver for his challenging letters. Maybe offering a year's subscription or two, or even perhaps a column of his own? Hmm. He would have to think about it.

Xeno also wondered if he should hire another assistant to help out since Luna was gone for most of the school year.

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Harry Potter was sitting under a shady tree in the orchard behind the Burrow. Thankfully, most of the Weasleys were busy and for once, Harry had some much needed privacy. On his lap and piled beside him were several files that he'd received from Gringotts and his barrister.

Now that was a kick in the bum! He, Harry James Potter, had a family retainer who was a Lord – of both Realms! And come to find out, he, Harry 'Who Is a Pain in the Arse' Potter, was also a peer in both worlds!

'Bloody Hell! My life just got more complicated,' Harry thought as he banged the back of his head against the trunk of the tree. He closed his eyes for a moment as his mind took in the fact that he had a seat

both on the Wizengamot and in the House of Lords! 'Merlin's bloody bollocks!'

Returning to the files as he brought his mind back to the matter at hand, Harry read over the stock reports of several companies he owned. According to what he was reading, it seemed the Potters were in the top ten percent of the richest families in the Wizarding World, and in the top twenty-five percent in Muggle Britain! What was Dumbledore playing at? Sending him to the Dursley's all those years ago? To live like a house elf and dress like a pauper? Why was he keeping him so ignorant of his inheritance and his titles? Why wasn't he being trained in dealing with his responsibilities as head of an ancient and noble house?

Bolting straight up, he whistled as he stared at the file in his hand. He couldn't believe it! He owned controlling shares in the Daily Prophet, half owned the Quibbler and oh Merlin, a quarter of the businesses in Diagon Alley! Bloody Hell, he even owned the land that Hogwarts and Hogsmead sat as heir to the Gryffindor line. He may only own a quarter share of Hogwarts, but still. He turned to the next page.

What's this? A yearly tithe? What the Hell? What kind of special vault? According to what he was reading, it could only be accessed by three people, himself as the Potter heir, and under specific criteria, the current headmaster and the Director of Gringotts. As of this date, Albus Dumbledore had accessed it three times in the past five years, in his tenure as headmaster, draining about a quarter of the available funds from the vault.

'Wonder why? Too bad, it doesn't list the reason for the withdrawal,' Harry thought, making a note in the journal he kept handy to inquire at Gringotts what criteria had to be met to make a withdrawal.

Picking up the last file, his eyes started to scan the list of muggle properties and again he had a shock. "Oh Sweet Merlin!" He whistled softly.

He quickly shuffled through the stacks of files until he found what he was looking for. He frowned, 'Why those thieving, back-stabbing arses!'

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Vernon Dursley was having a good day. Grunnings' stock had recently risen two points on the market shares, netting him a hefty bonus from old man Grunnings.

Dudley had been given a clean bill of health from his ordeal with those unnatural thingies that went after his freakish nephew. He couldn't wait to get his hands on that freak next summer. He'd teach him a thing or two!

Awaiting at his desk was a slender stack of the morning post left for him by his secretary. Taking a sip of his fifth cuppa for the morning, Vernon reached for the first opened envelope. He took another sip as he glanced over the letter, only to spit out the mouthful, choking as he reread:

From the office of Peter J. Flinchley-Addams, Barrister, Lord of the Realm:

To: Mr. Vernon C. Dursley,

It has come to our attention that there has been misappropriation of funds. Therefore an audit was been ordered on all records in all departments dating back to 1981.

You are hereby required to present all records and accounts for inspection Tuesday next. There will be an audit of personal expense accounts for all department heads performed as well.

Compliance is mandatory. Any department head failing to cooperate will be suspended without pay pending such time as the audit is final where upon disciplinary action will be taken if necessary.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams
Retainer-At-Law

cc
Ragnok, Director of Gringotts Bank
All Stock Holders, Grunnings Inc.
All Heads of Departments, Grunnings Inc.

Vernon stood up as coffee spilled down his pant legs. "What the F. . .! Martha! Get your arse in here, bring your notepad!" he roared, grabbing the phone, and angrily punching his home phone number as his secretary entered. "Pet! . . . "

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Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams polished off the document needed to free Lord Potter from Albus Dumbledore's control adding it to the swiftly growing Potter file. He mused on the young lord leaning back in his chair.

Harry James Potter had surprised him. The rumors surrounding him bore no likeness to the young wizard he met right after the trial. Time had not allowed for them to go into details of Lord Harry's life to date and with a third party listening in, it was more than awkward. However, his impression of Harry was very favorable. It appeared that the lad inherited his parents' high intelligence and high levels of magic, belying Harry's mediocre academic records and poor press reviews.

How did the lad manage to hid his talents so well? He could see that Arthur Weasley was out of his depth and flabbergasted at the few details that Harry had revealed. He hoped the man would shake his blind allegiance to the conniving Headmaster and open his eyes to the wrongs done to an innocent child.

The secret letter exchange he and Lord Harry were carrying on was proving to be very enlightening. This is where the lad's true abilities shone through. If they adhered to the agenda the lad wanted, they could set the wizarding world on it's ear. Something that was long over due, in Lord Peter's opinion.

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Tom was leaning over the bar with the Quibbler beside him and next to the rag was an official looking parchment carrying the Ministry seal. He was checking between both of them with great interest.

"Wotcher Tom!" called one of his regulars as he plopped down on a stool across from the bartender. "Watcha doin', mate? Why'ncha readin' a real paper like the Prophet?"

Tom looked up. "Comparin' notes 'n bloody hell, ol' Xeno was right on! The Prophet didn't tell the truth by half."

"That so?" the scruffy-looking wizard asked. "Be a first, iff'n ya ask me."

"Oh Xeno's been right afore," Tom snorted, pouring out a stout and handing it off.

The customer pulled the Quibbler and the document over to read. "Hey! This'n is a court record! Bloody Hell! Where did ya git this?"

"Hall of Records, t'wasn't sealed, court records are open to the public. This is Potter's trial from a few days ago," Tom replied, setting his copy aside for the moment.

"What? Thought the boy got off on a technicality or the like? 'Eard the Minister wasn't happy," came from a nearby table.

"Right 'nuff! They're arsed off! Seems what was in the Prophet was only half the story, as usual," Tom snorted. "Right after I got my copy of the transcript, Ol' Fudge came stormin' in and sealed this record 'n all other records regardin' Potter."

"Tryin' to cover his muck-up, eh?"

"A tad late iff'n ya ask me," shouted a hag from a nearby table with a cackle. "Iff'n the Min'ster tried that with my bonny lad, I'da hexed 'em good 'n proper 'n taken me chances wif the D'menters, I would!"

Several customers nodded in agreement. From a table in the back, a slurred voice called out, "Wonder what they's tryin' ta tuck 'way? Ol' Fudge 's good 'bout speak'n out both sides of his mouth, he is!"

"Aye!" shouted several of the pub's denizens, raising their mugs in agreement.

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Fudge fumed and ranted. His beet red face contrasting garishly with his green pin-striped robes. Since the Quibbler came out yesterday, his office had been fielding mail and howlers all day. Good thing he

managed to seal Potter's trial transcript and records. Too bad he hadn't been fast enough. Well, he learned his lesson.

With almost 50 copies of Potter's transcripts out and about, his office is working overtime on damage control. How did this get out of hand so quickly? He knew it was Xeno Lovegood's fault for running that damn brat's letter. Well, he'd fix both of them! See how they like spending some time in Azkaban! He'll pass a law to seal all trial transcripts from now on.

Thankfully, Delores is going to Hogwarts this term. With her there, he'll have a foothold in the school. Hopefully, she'll ferret out who this Oliver Twist is and get him expelled for starting this mess.

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Albus stared at the letter that had arrived from Gringotts. He had been so sure that he could use that vault for the greater good. He didn't think he would be called on it by the Goblins. It had been almost three years since his last withdrawal. He would soon need more and just where was he going to get the funds? He was sure the Goblins would not allow him access to the Potter vaults as they are now watching them so closely.

Unto Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts.

During a routine audit on all of our outstanding vaults, it has come to our attention that the Hogwarts vault set up by Godric Gryffindor to maintain Hogwarts and Hogsmeade's lands in perpetuity has shown recent activity. This vault can only be accessed by Gryffindor's heirs, and/or Hogwarts Headmaster and the Director of Gringotts. As you know these funds were set up for care and maintenance of both Hogwarts and Hogsmeade.

It has come to our attention that you have accessed these funds three times in the past five years, withdrawing over a quarter of available funds. We require proof of the usage of these funds in the form of receipts and/or bills of lading. If we find these funds were used inappropriately withdrawn, you are required to make restitution with interest.

Compliance is mandatory. Failure to comply will cause all vaults to which you have access to be sealed until this matter is resolved.

Ragnok

Director of Gringotts

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Wow! Three chapters in one week. Can you tell we are having fun?

We wish to thank you all for the amazing reviews. Some were very mind blowing.

One reader had me in stitches as he/she sounded just like Frau in one of her rants. We will take all comments, suggestions with a grain of salt and may use them. This story is mostly all written out and needs a bit of tweaking but can be subject to change, if need be.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 5: In the Dog house

Arthur Weasley was by no means a cowed man. Granted, his wife Molly was a force to be reckoned with when she got going and he left family matters and discipline to her, but only because she was very good at it. No, Arthur considered himself a laid back sort of fellow.

However, since Ron had befriended an orphan by the name of Harry Potter, Arthur's comfortable world had turned upside down. He couldn't fault his son, it just seemed like the right thing to do despite all of the 'adventures' they had shared. Harry was so small and fragile back then.

The day after the trial, Arthur decided to sit down with his three youngest sons and had a quiet talk. What they told him was nothing short of criminal! How could a man as wise as Albus Dumbledore be so blind in his dealings with The Boy Who Lived. It was beyond his understanding. Hmm. . .Unless. . .Maybe? . . . No, he couldn't, could he?

Alone in his office at the ministry several days later, the disturbed red-headed wizard wrote down everything he knew, or speculated about Harry Potter from his talk with his sons. Along with their information, he added his own observations. It was too bad he couldn't speak about the meeting with the Potter family barrister as his oath prevented it. On a separate parchment he made a note about the necessity of taking Harry to consult his barrister, if he could dodge Albus to do so.

Arthur also jotted a reminder to ask the goblins to check on the wards around Potter's muggle relative's home. A person as important as Harry Potter should have extensive wards protecting his home. He now wondered just what kind of wards Albus had actually placed and if they were as effective as the headmaster claimed.

At lunch time, Arthur Weasley walked out of this office, told his secretary he would see her after lunch, and strolled casually through the ministry. He stopped to chat with fellow co workers before going to a small hidden drop chute inside a normal-looking stall in the men's loo. There he dropped all of his morning musings into the chute.

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An operative in the Unspeakable department knocked on the Head's office door. "A report just came in from the Sparkplug, Croaker," he said, handing over several pieces of parchment. "It makes an interesting read, if you ask me."

Croaker, Head of the Unspeakables, frowned as he put down the latest issue of the Quibbler. "Let's see it."

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Harry sat at the kitchen table at Grimmauld Place listening to Sirius as he held court during dinner. Laughter and mayhem seemed to be the soup du jour. In Harry's opinion it made for a lively contrast to meals at the Dursley's.

According to the adults, there was an Order Meeting tonight so several people that Harry had never met before sat around the table with them. Tonks was at the far end, showing off her amazing technicolor skills as a metamorphmagus. 'Interesting person Tonks,' Harry mused. 'Hard to believe she is Sirius' cousin.'

Harry stifled a sigh. He had at first been thrilled that Sirius wanted him to live with him last spring but now, Harry wasn't too sure. His trust in adults was very flimsy at best and after he had a chance to sit down and think things through, he had to wonder about Sirius' motives.

Harry couldn't get over the fact that Sirius put revenge against Wormtail first, before making sure that toddler Harry was safe and well cared for. Shouldn't his top priority have been Harry and not revenge? Wormtail could have waited, after all. Instead he let his immature temper lead him to Azkaban and left Harry to 'gentle' care of the Dursleys.

Then there was Sirius' slip of tongue, from time to time, calling Harry – 'James.' Not to mention that this summer he hadn't gotten any mail or visits from his so-called Godfather. There were ways to visit without Dumbledore knowing and Merlin knows he had a house elf that could have delivered mail and food. Harry figured that he just

wasn't that high on the food chain as far as Sirius was concerned, or anyone else for that matter.

Also Harry couldn't get past the heated discussion that he'd had with his friends about their lack of communication. Of course, according to them, he didn't write either. Well, how could he if Dumbledore had Hedwig? Not their problem, he was told. He had rounded on Hermione about using muggle mail and she only snapped that he could've too. He countered with the fact that the Dursley's screened all the post and how was he supposed to buy stamps for postage with no muggle money! His relatives certainly would not have given him any muggle money or stamps.

Hermione huffed and said it didn't matter. The headmaster had said not to contact Harry at all. At which point Harry gave up the argument as a lost cause. When they realize just how badly Dumbledore was snowing everyone, it'd be too late.

"Now you children," Molly said as she started to clear the table. "Go into the other rooms. The meeting will be starting soon."

Harry found himself ushered out of the dining room and up the stairs. The twins wore a knowing smirk as they pulled out what looked to be a set of ears tied to a string.

Harry half-listened to their explanation as he went to the room he shared with Ron. Once he was sure that no one was following him, he closed the door before calling for Dobby.

"Is it in place, Dobby?" he asked, plopping onto his cot.

"Yes, Master Harry, sir. I've attached it to under the table like you've said so. Will it work? It's not going to cause you've problems?"

Harry smiled. "No, Dobby. No problems. No one saw you?"

Dobby shook his head, his long ears whipping back and forth. "No Master Harry Sir. Anything else?"

"No, Dobby, just retrieve it after the meeting is over with," Harry smiled, dismissing his little friend.

Harry couldn't believe his luck. He hadn't had much of a chance to field test the little walkman recorder that he had bought in Surrey. With the help of Dobby, he had charmed the thing to run on magic instead of batteries. Of course, he could get into a lot of trouble if it was found out, but what's a little risk versus a lot of knowledge?

He just had to know if the Order was on to him and his letters to the Quibbler. Plus he wanted to know what they were doing to fight Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

Since he couldn't do much right now and was alone, he might as well work on another letter to the Quibbler.

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Xeno watched the antics of his daughter Luna as she ran around the garden chasing flying wrackspurts. She was the light of his life since the death of her mother. She was the only joy he had left in the world and he worried about her when she went away to Hogwarts. An owl came to rest by him with a letter breaking into his thoughts. He turned to the owl and gently removed the letter from its leg.

"There is food and water in the kitchen help yourself," he said as he opened the letter.

Dear Mr. Lovegood,

Your reply made for a very interesting read last time and I will take your concerns to heart. Neither do I wish to be brought before the Wizengamot for libel, even if I am still under-age. For as we all know now, being under age is no protection.

Since you and I are discussing trials, I was very interested to learn, by eavesdropping on Potter and his little friends, that Sirius Black was never given a trial. Very bad form that, if you ask me, since he is after all Head of an Ancient and Noble House.

If the ministry can so blatantly do that to one head of an ancient and noble house, what keeps from them doing it to another? Oh I forgot, they did. According to the Prophet, Potter is also the Head of an Ancient and Noble House, even if he is underage and look at the farce of a trial he was given.

Where was Albus Dumbledore in all this? Why didn't Professor Dumbledore push for a trial for Black? He was head of the Wizengamot at the time and it was certainly within his power to do so. Why did he stand by and condone such a miscarriage of justice when three little drops of veritaserum would've put paid to the whole matter?

Last spring, I managed to overhear Potter and his little cohorts discussing Black. Did you know he was Potter's Godfather? And according to what I overheard, he wasn't even the Potter's Secret Keeper? Potter mentioned someone by the name of Peter Pettigrew was. Potter claimed that Pettigrew was alive and hiding and no one was seeming to take him seriously when he told them about it. Here again I ask, where was the veritaserum or pensieve memory?

And what was the Ministry doing sending Dementors to Hogwarts two years ago? I was at the game where Potter was almost Kissed. Yes almost kissed! What kept them from going rogue with all the fresh, impressionable minds around school? What was the Ministries' take on all this? Why, it was to keep us safe from a lone serial killer!

Oh please, Dementors have killed more people than Black allegedly did. So isn't putting a hungry pack of wolves in with the lambs and then expecting them to behave rather idiotic? Don't you think a lone serial killer whose only target is said to be Harry Potter is far less of a threat than a pack of dementors who don't care whose soul they happen to suck? Lunch is served at Hogwarts and the students are the main course!

What is the policy of veritaserum on minors and pensieve memories used in trial? Why haven't Potter and his cohorts been questioned and their memories viewed to confirm or deny their statements? Or is the Ministry afraid that the truth might actually come out and make them look the fool?

The more I dig through this little fiasco, the more it has holes the size of bludgers in it. Also, what about the Queen's law? Is the Ministry so removed from reality that they forget to acknowledge British Common Law? We are, after all, still the Queen's subjects.

Maybe I shouldn't question things. Maybe I should be a sheep and do nothing, like most wizards. However, I like to sleep at night with a

clear conscience, if you can understand that concept. It would seem not many in the Wizarding World do.

Oliver Twist

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Frau and I are really taking most of the helpful reviews to heart. We are amazed at the number. However, we feel we need to address a couple of issues. Yes, the chapters are choppy. We are focusing mainly on Oliver's letters and the reaction to them and are not trying for a smooth flowing story, but rather a series of vignettes.

Hope this helps for those that are confused.

Lastely, for Vernon as the CEO. From our understanding, Grunnings was a family run business and Vernon was only a director/department head. For those that feel this is wrong, we most humbly apologize and state for our purpose, he is as we said.

And Alorkin, keep up the reviews. It's too bad you live so far away. We love your sarcasm. Frau shares your opinion of Dumbledore. Me, I stay out of it, it's safer.

Until Next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 6: Trust Issues?

Emily Anderson blew out her cheeks and huffed in frustration. She'd spent the past three days wading through mountains of files in the Daily Prophet Archives as well as the Ministry Hall of Records.

The tip from Lovegood was a good one. He'd been right on target. The ministry was trying to bury their mistakes with Sirius Black. According to Fudge, Black was being blamed for everything, from being a Death Eater to being responsible for the nasty, over-flowing urinal in the men's loo. Anything and everything, the minister was trying to pin it all on the escapee from Azkaban. According to public opinion it was working.

When Lord Charles came out of that fateful meeting with the barrister last week, he announced that the Prophet was under new management. The ministry no longer had any real say on what was, or wasn't, printed. Also, under the new policies, all news stories had to be backed up with solid facts, and hard core evidence. No more quick quote pens were allowed. If you couldn't back it up, then the story, no matter how exclusive, would not be printed. Several reporters already had turned in their resignations, unfortunately Rita Skeeter wasn't one of them.

Which is why Emily was digging in the files. Lord Charles had given her a week off, with pay, to do some dirt digging. Since the day that Lord Flinchley-whatever came into the offices of the Prophet on behalf of the primary stockholder, Lord Charles had been looking more like his old self. Emily was quite pleased with the shake up since Rita was demoted to the garden columns. The news reporting was now less biased towards gossip and dealt more with the real issues.

Rita was finding herself with more and more trivial garden club assignments than actual hard core journalistic stories. The rumor mill had it that Rita was out for blood, anyone's blood. If it was Harry Potter's, even better. She didn't like her new assignments, even if they were more her style of writing.

Which is why Emily was now digging in the Hall of Records. She was looking for everything pertaining to the Potters and Blacks that wasn't classified. So far, she was coming up with nothing. No will was on file for the Potters. Strange, as the Potters, a wealthy ancient

and noble house, knew that the Dark Lord was hunting them so they had to have a will made up to protect the interests of their infant son, Harry. There wasn't even proof of guardianship arrangements for their son that she could find.

All this smacked of a cover up, but how to go about proving it?

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Harry was getting used to the small amount of sleep he'd been getting since his return to the Wizarding World. At least once a week, around midnight, he would port-key to Gringotts for a meeting with his advisers, Lord Peter and Director Ragnok. Both were very helpful in their advice on Harry's legal and financial dealings.

Harry however, had been looking over some law books and had a question for both. Tomorrow would be his fifteenth birthday. So he felt it was only fitting to ask this question.

"So hypothetically," Harry queried in the meeting the night before his birthday, "If three government bodies declared, for legal purposes, a minor to be an adult in such a way that it became public record, would said minor, due to the precedence set, be considered an adult in the eyes of the law?"

"What do you mean, Lord Harry?" Lord Peter asked, a bit stunned by the question.

"Well, let me put it this way," Harry said. "Say a fourteen year old boy's name came out of a magical artifact that had a magical age restriction of seventeen on it, and yet said authority figures in charge required said underage teen to honor the magical contract without the written permission of parent or guardian—would that constitute acknowledging the teen in question as a legal adult? Then, the same fourteen year old boy, was brought before the whole Wizengamot for violation of underage magic use and was tried as an adult. Would this mean said fourteen year old could be considered an adult in the eyes of the ministry? After all, the Supreme Mugwump and member of the ICW, the Minister and the Wizengamot themselves, acknowledged said fourteen year old as an adult in their eyes."

Harry looked at both men, as they sat frozen in stunned silence. As he leaned back in his chair, he wondered if he had broken them?

Lord Peter looked at Harry then over at Ragnok. Stroking his chin, the aged barrister pondered for a moment. "I would have to double check your findings but I would say it would be a fair assumption. However, I would caution you, neither the Minister or the Headmaster would allow you to be emancipated so easily."

Harry gave a nod of agreement. "Honestly, if people keep putting me in adult situations, don't you think I should have the right to be considered an adult in the eyes of the law and all that it would entail such as protecting myself with magic if necessary? That is why I would like both you, Lord Peter and Director Ragnok, to be my guardians and or advisers until I reach adult age even if I am emancipated."

"Lord Harry," Ragnok interjected. "If you give up your minor status, you could lose certain privileges as a minor. You would have to accept all the consequences that went with being an adult."

Harry snorted. "Being a minor didn't help me much last year, now did it? I still had to compete in that bloody tournament. And I still got slapped for defending myself and my cousin from those bloody dementors which just 'happened' to wander away from Azkaban."

"True," Lord Peter said. "But why Ragnok and myself? And not say - the Weasleys? Or your godfather, Sirius Black?"

"I have given this much thought over the summer, as I had nothing else to do while at my relatives," Harry explained, rubbing a hand across his forehead. "Sirius is still on the run from the Ministry. Although with the last few articles and probes from both the Quibbler and the Prophet, that might soon change," Harry sighed, still running a hand through his already messy hair. "Arthur and Molly Weasley are too much under Dumbledore's thumb. No. They all expect me to fight their battles for them, but I need someone that will fight for me and only for me. No one else ever has until I met you both."

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Hermione was frustrated. Harry had changed. She could see it but she couldn't quite put her finger on what was wrong. Couldn't he

understand that Dumbledore himself, told them not to contact him because it wasn't safe? It had been for his own good, but Harry refused to see that Dumbledore was only trying to protect him.

Harry's birthday party was a noisy explosion of fun, laughter and mayhem. Now that the party was over and everyone had gone, Harry had retreated into himself once again. So it wasn't any surprise she found Harry sitting in the library, reading. Ron and the twins were off somewhere doing something for Molly.

"Harry?"

"Yes Hermione?"

She sat down beside him. "What's wrong? You've been avoiding Ron and me since you got back."

Harry sighed and closed his book. Turning to face his friend, he said, "Nothing is wrong, Hermione."

"But we are your friends. You shouldn't shut us out."

"Shut you out? Don't you think you've got it backwards?"

"What do you mean?"

Harry shook his head. "I was stuck at the Dursleys, Hermione. Dumbledore took Hedwig away. He said it wasn't safe. My friends decided I wasn't worth the trouble it took to write. You didn't even try to keep in touch with me, forgot how to use a phone? Do you know how that made me feel?"

"Oh Harry," she said, rolling her eyes. "Not this again."

Harry sighed, slamming his book closed, and stood. "Yes, this again. So tell me Hermione, which is more important to you, doing what is right or what is easy?"

"And what is right, Harry? Dumbledore said it wasn't safe to contact you."

Harry sighed and shook his head. "If you say so, Hermione. I thought you were my friend. Tell me, are you telling him everything I do? Do you report when I eat, sleep and go to the loo, too?"

"Harry James Potter!" She shouted indignantly. "I would never spy on you!"

"But if you thought I was holding back information that Dumbledore wanted, you would tell him. All for the Greater good, right?" he snarled.

She huffed, standing.

"Right Hermione?"

She let out a growl and stomped off.

OOOoOoO

Sirius Black was feverishly writing a letter that he hoped would free him, at Harry's urging. Since the Quibbler was doing so many pieces on his lack of trial record, he had been corresponding with Madam Bones' office, through Gringotts. The goblins were well known for their neutrality. He wasn't completely insane, no matter what the Prophet had written about him in the past.

It hadn't taken much to send certified copies of pensieve memories of himself, Harry's and Hermione's memories along with sworn blood oath statements about his innocence. This last letter was a gamble.

Gringotts had offered a private room as neutral ground. Sirius would give himself up to Goblins only if the trial would be held under their supervision. It would cost him a pretty knut, but was well worth the effort if he could win his freedom. Gringotts' well-known neutrality would work in Sirius' favor. He was too afraid that Fudge and his administration would sabotage the deal and bring in the dementors before he could open his mouth. He was well aware of Fudge's mandate to be Kissed on capture.

Sirius could only thank this Oliver Twist and the Quibbler for this chance. He didn't know who this student was and wondered if had been Harry, the boy was the son of a Marauder after all. However, all of the evidence pointed to a Ravenclaw with a bit of Slytherin in

him or her. Who cares? He would name his first born after this kid if he got free!

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Albus Dumbledore sighed as he pondered this latest development. He felt bad that he'd been a party to sending Sirius to Azkaban without a trial, but all the evidence pointed to his guilt. For the Greater Good, it was necessary to get Sirius out of the way as the man would not go along with his plans for Harry. As head of the Wizengamot, Albus could've pushed for a trial last year when new evidence was uncovered but he still needed Harry with his relatives for the boy's own safety. Now this push for Sirius' acquittal was threatening to undo years of hard work.

His thoughts turned to this Oliver Twist. Just who is this boy? He had to be a muggle born student. Maybe Ravenclaw by the writing. There were muggle borns in that house that had, in the past, loudly questioned how the Wizarding World ignored basic tenets of British law. Dumbledore would have to ask Filius when he returned to Hogwarts. 'Perhaps,' Albus mused, 'he will have some thoughts as to who this student could be.'

It was surprising to him just how many were reading that rag and believing the letters. Most people usually dismissed the Quibbler as Xeno usually focused on the absurd. The aged headmaster couldn't forbid his staff or the Order members to read the newspaper. Xeno was very good at printing Death Eater activities as well as passing messages to allies in code for him. Plus the crosswords were ingeniously clever, and made a good lining for Fawkes' perch.

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Dobby popped in silently as Harry was reading while Ron slept nearby. "Letter for you's, Master Harry sir," he said quietly, handing over an envelope with Xeno Lovegood's seal on it.

"Thanks Dobby. Remember, you can't be seen," Harry whispered, looking nervously over at Ron.

"No worry, Master Harry, sir," Dobby reassured him. "Your Wheezy won't wakes. Dobby makes sure that." Harry smiled and thanked his friend.

Dear Mr. Twist,

I am writing to you personally to let you know that my subscribers list has almost tripled since you started writing to me. Although it is more work than I can possibly handle alone, I am pleased that so many are now enjoying my humble publication.

Therefore, I wish to offer you gainful employment as a regular columnist with your own by-line. Also, I wish to pass on the many responses I have received from your delightful letters. Be assured, no howlers will be sent to you. I have wards that destroy any howlers before arrival without harm to myself or any owl that has the unfortunate task of delivering one.

I also reassure you that your privacy and anonymity will be respected. If you are interested, please contact me and give me the name of your account manager so that I can set up an account in your pen name.

As always, I look forward to your next thought provoking letter.

Xeno Lovegood
Quibbler Editor-in-Chief

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Frau and I are still very stunned at the reviews and hits on this story. As one reviewer pointed out, yes we are trying to fill the holes we see in canon. Although, we feel we aren't always successful but we do try.

As for the trust issues, Harry doesn't have any. Everyone in our opinion has been hand-picked by Dumbledore to have a part in Harry's life. He will be placing more and more trust in Lord Peter and Ragnok as they haven't lied to Harry yet.

Lastly, as for pairings. As far as we can tell, there will be no pairings as of yet. That is a subject for a later date.

And as for Sirius, keep reading.

Special thanks to all of the reviewers.

Until Next Time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 7: The Beginnings of a Beautiful Relationship

Dear Mr. Lovegood,

I accept your offer. Enclosed is my first article. If it doesn't meet your standards, please let me know and I will rework it.

Also enclosed is the number of my vault under the name of Oliver Twist. Please remit all payments to Gringotts as I would like to remain anonymous. This way we are both protected as you only know me by my pen name. I hope this will prove as protection for you from ministry harassment and is not too much of an inconvenience for you.

I look forward to a long and interesting career working for your newspaper.

Oliver Twist

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Harry smiled as he watched the landscape go whipping by. He was sure that by now that Mr. Lovegood had received his letter and his column. He had, at first, been worried that he'd given away too much information in his last published letter. However, for some reason, it seemed to have gone over everyone's head.

'I guess it just goes to show that wizarding society needs someone to do their thinking for them,' Harry thought with a mental snort.

Sitting across from him was a blonde haired girl reading the Quibbler upside down. Hermione and Ron had left the compartment to go to a prefects' meeting. In Harry's opinion, making Ron a prefect was one of the more asinine ideas the staff of Hogwarts had. Then again, it probably wasn't the staff, more like Dumbledork -er- Dumbledore rewarding the Weasleys for their blind obedience.

Don't get him wrong, he liked Ron – up to a point. Ron protected Harry from their more over zealous classmates for which Boy-Who-Lived was grateful but not that grateful. Again in Harry's opinion, Neville would make a better prefect than Ron Weasley ever could. He wondered how long before McGonagall pulled his badge. 'Probably for fighting, what with that temper of his,' he mused.

The train ride did nothing to ease Harry's mind about the upcoming term. If anything, it was undoubtedly going to be business as usual. Hard telling what kind of a 'test' the Headmaster had planned for this year. If past years were any indication, it'll be a near death experience as usual. How near was any one's guess.

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Exiting the train, Harry hurried to an open carriage. He hesitated before entering it. For the first time he could see what kind of a creature usually pulled the carriages to Hogwarts. Now that was freaky.

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Filius Flitwick sipped his tea as he mentally sighed. He had several things he needed to finish before the students arrived, and here he was, stuck in yet another of one of Albus' "let's get on the same page" staff meetings.

". . .Of course, this Twist is a Ravenclaw," Severus Snape, the resident Potions master snarked, breaking into the diminutive Charms Master's thoughts.

"And why do you think that?" Filius asked, finally taking an interest in the topic at hand.

"Well, for one, it can't be a Gryffindor as they are not thinkers, and for the most part are barely literate," Severus sneered causing Minerva to huff.

Severus smirked at her as he continued. "Now don't deny it, you old tabby. We all know that your little lions are not capable of questioning anything, much less writing about it coherently. They tend to leap before they think."

"Well, there is Miss Granger. . . " Pomona started to say.

"Oh please," he interrupted with a roll of his eyes, "that little know it all does not question anything coming from an authority figure. And everything she reads, she takes as gospel. It stands to reason that

this Twist is a Ravenclaw. I am sure that Filius would back me on this."

"Don't get me involved in this discussion," Filius said. "I really do not care who Twist is. I applaud any student that questions the world around them. It is a sign of an inquisitive mind and should be encouraged rather than slapped down."

"Then he, or she, is not a Ravenclaw?" Albus asked.

Filius shrugged taking a sip of his tea. "I did not say that. I said I really don't care who Twist is. Be they a Ravenclaw or not, the questions being asked need answers and I commend whoever is brave enough to ask them."

The meeting went on to other things. Finally, everything covered, hashed and re-hashed until it was down to a couple of hours before the train was due to arrive.

'Thank Merlin that this is over with,' Filius thought as he hurried to leave. 'Honestly, doesn't anyone pay attention to the essays that are turned in around here? Students rarely change their writing style over night.'

The Charms Professor found Twist's letters intriguing and their tone somewhat familiar. It had taken him several letters before he had narrowed it down to who he felt was writing as Oliver Twist, but he wasn't about to say anything. Plus there was the clue in the pen name as well. Oliver Twist was a well-known and well loved character in muggle literature. This alone was enough to point towards a muggleborn or muggle-raised.

After all, it wasn't his place to identify the writer and frankly, he agreed with his goblin brethren. The Wizarding World, in his opinion, needed a good shaking up.

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While the Hogswart Express huffed its way through the midlands of England on its way north, Lord Peter strode purposefully through the Halls of the Ministry. He was on a mission and he really did not want to be intercepted or deterred.

His first stop would be at the Children's Wizarding Services. He would need a copy of Lord Harry's file before he met with Madams Marchbanks and Bones. If everything went well, then the first step of the emancipation of Lord Harry James Potter would be well on its way. By the time Lord Peter was finished, the exalted, at least in his own mind, Albus Dumbledore would be unable to say or do anything about it.

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Xeno Lovegood looked over the final draft and was well pleased with Oliver's first article. The theme was perfect for the fall opening of Hogwarts.

Today, it is with great pleasure that we, here at the Quibbler, now publish Oliver Twist's first column under his own by line. We hope to see many great things from this inquiring young journalist. -Xeno Lovegood, Editor-in-Chief.

Reflections on a New School Year

by Oliver Twist

As the Hogwarts Express barrels through the English countryside towards a new school year, I find myself anxious about what lies ahead. I noticed that all my friends are excited for the term to start, but I have to wonder. . .

The professors, are they ready for us this year? I hope so. I know I am ready for the term to start.

Who will be our new DADA instructor, will they be competent? If so it will be a pleasant surprise. Last year's was supposed to be a retired auror, but rumor has it, he was a former Death Eater. The bloke was strange to say the least, and taught us some highly illegal spells. He even demonstrated all three unforgivables in class! And then, he even turned a student into a ferret.

Will our next DADA professor have a Master's in Defense, or at least an 'O' level N.E.W.T in the subject? Will he or she be competent enough to teach us. Will we be subjected to incompetence again? One can only hope not. Believe it or not, in the past five years, we

have had only one competent instructor only to have him fired for being a werewolf at the end of the year.

Speaking of learning, did you know that in order to teach all the major core classes (Transfiguration, Charms, Potions and Defense), the professors must have either a masters in their chosen fields or at least O's in their N.E.W.T.S?

If you look at the scores and percentage rates of the three top magical schools in Europe versus the top three magical schools in the United States, you will note that the schools in Europe come out second best. Don't believe me? Owl the International Wizarding Council. They have all the records. Hogwarts ranks 4th, followed by Beauxbaton then Durmstrang. The top school in the world is in Japan.

As we near Hogwarts, my thoughts also turn to Potter. He always seems to come back thinner and more haggard each year. For someone who is supposed to be from an old pureblood family, he doesn't seem to care how he presents himself.

Last year, the so dubbed Golden Trio seemed to be splitting at the seams. Will they come back together now that two of the three are prefects or will it divide them further?

I want to thank Mr. Lovegood for allowing me the chance to ask these questions and to point out my observations of the Wizarding World. However, it also has me wondering why no one else has spoken up in the past?

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Frau and I are not happy with this chapter but we can't put out top notch chapters all the time.

We received 58 reviews last chapter, thank you all. We try to answer them privately when we can.

Have a safe and happy holiday from GenkaiFan and the Frau.

in order to teach

Chapter 8: Fall Out

Lord Charles read the latest edition of the Quibbler and smirked. It was the best thing he ever did was passing on Oliver Twist's letter. The Quibbler gave him the chance to ask the forbidden questions the Prophet could not under the political climate at that time. It had been a proud moment when he took over as Editor in Chief of the Prophet, but that moment didn't last long.

With the death of the Potters and their political and financial influence, the Prophet slowly fell to the machinations and power of the ministry. Gone were the tenets and principles espoused by the Potters in all their business dealings. Without their influence as major stock-holders, the Prophet became little more than the Ministry's mouthpiece. Thank Merlin, that has now changed.

When Fudge threatened to shut the Prophet down for not following Ministry guidelines, he was confronted in the atrium of the Ministry by the Prophet's barristers and was slapped with a lawsuit for interfering with a private business. Cornelius Fudge couldn't close down the newspaper as the ministry didn't have controlling shares to do so, nor he prove malfeasance on the part of the Prophet. The rather public confrontation and ensuing embarrassment was enough for Fudge to beat a hasty retreat back to his office, legal papers clutched in a sweaty fist.

Picking up a quill, Lord Charles penned a note to his rival editor, Xeno Lovegood. This Oliver Twist was a breath of fresh air. As the editor of the Prophet, and a journalist to the bone, it was his duty to join the hunt and fan the flames of revolution the Quibbler had ignited.

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The great hall was buzzing. At the Ravenclaw table, Luna Lovegood passed out copies of the Quibbler to any students who wanted it. All throughout the Great Hall, many were seen reading the strange periodical in one hand and eating with the other. Several scoffed at the rag but more students seemed to be nodding their heads in agreement. If one was paying attention, they would noticed that most of those who were nodding were muggle borns. A couple of the 'Claws had family in management and statistical research. They knew where to find the data needed to prove or disprove Twist's

statements. The owls would be busy tonight, that is if the headmaster didn't lock down the owlery.

Harry munched quietly on a piece of toast as he listened to the conversation around him. A copy of the Quibbler was glued to Hermione's face. Thankfully, Dobby knew better than to deliver Harry's copy in front of so many witnesses.

"What! I can't believe this," she was muttering. "This can't be right! You mean to tell me my parents are paying for a second rate education! I could've been prepping for an Uni degree for what they are paying for here!"

"What are you on about, 'Mione?" Ron asked through a mouthful of eggs. "What in Merlin's name are you yakking about now?"

With an angry snap of her copy of the Quibbler, she hissed. "I, for one, was told that Hogwarts was the premier magical school in the world. This says otherwise, and if it is true, Hogwarts misrepresented itself and opened itself up for legal action."

"Harry!" Ron whinged, spitting bits of his breakfast across the table. "Has she gone mental?"

"How! How did he know we made prefect?" she stammered. "We didn't know until a week before the train."

Harry leaned back in his chair, brushing off the half-chewed bits. "Leave me out of it, mate. It's getting late. I have to get to class. Ask one of the Ravenclaws if you aren't sure. They get off on such things." Harry shrugged at Hermione as he gathered up his bag. "Maybe he wrote it on the train and saw you two patrolling?"

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Filius Flitwick was well pleased with his house. Ravenclaws were research driven, but they also knew that logic isn't the be-all and end-all of a problem. Given time, he knew that he would be reading research papers based on today's Quibbler article. He chuckled quietly to himself. They should prove interesting reading.

At the other end of the head table, Severus Snape viciously balled up the Quibbler, crunching it tightly. "How dare they print such

blatant rubbish! How dare that impertinent brat infer that instructors of this school are incompetent?" To all seated at the Head Table, it seemed that the potions master took personal exception to the claims in Twist's article.

"Severus, my boy," Albus said, looking up from his morning treat of lemon curds and scones. "What ever is the matter?"

"Have you even looked at this..this..rag Albus? Twist has gone too far! He dared imply Hogwarts gives its students an inferior education!" Severus frothed in absolute rage.

"Oh Severus, calm yourself. I hardly think people will take a child's scribbles seriously." Minerva McGonagall said as she looked up from her copy of the Quibbler. "Unless it hit a nerve? Tell me Severus, how many of your little snakes, or their parents, do you think will come to you to complain about the quality of education their children are getting here? Hogwarts has been a world leader among wizarding schools since it was built."

What are you implying?" Severus snarled.

"Only that this is becoming a, 'Tempest in a Teapot', and I hardly think it is worth the energy you expend ranting about it." Minerva huffed, giving her copy a snap with her wrist as she returned to her reading.

"Now, now," Albus interjected. "Classes will be starting soon, don't you think it's time you get to them? Mustn't keep our students waiting in the Halls."

"Hem, hem," a toad-like woman cleared her throat. "Personally, I refuse to read such blatant filth. The Minister is very anxious to discover the identity of this Oliver Twist. His lies are causing problems, and I think the good Professor has every right to be upset," she simpered in a little-girl voice while smiling sweetly at Severus.

"I am sorry my dear," Albus said affably. "We have no clue who Mr. Twist is. We do believe he is either a muggle-born, or has muggle connections. We suspect he is a Ravenclaw but Filius . . ."

"I object, Albus," Filius jumped in, standing. "For all we know he could be a Hufflepuff or Slytherin. I see no reason to accuse my House without proof!"

"None of my Slytherins wrote this garbage," Severus interjected from his end of the table. "Only a Ravenclaw would spout statistics. . ."

Sensing an impending explosion from Flitwick, Madam Sprout broke in, "I wonder if Mr. Potter could have written this?"

Severus snorted. "Please! Potter couldn't write his way out of a cauldron. He is a mediocre student at best and lacks the vocabulary to have written these articles."

"His parents were highly intelligent," Filius muttered as he turned to leave. "As much as I would like to finish this discussion, I have a class in 15 minutes. If you will excuse me. . ."

"He is right," Minerva said, sounding a bit disappointed and a mite sad. "James and Lily Potter were gifted wizards. Harry just doesn't seem to measure up to them."

"Thank Merlin," Severus muttered as he stood to leave.

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Harry watched the sun sinking into the west as he sat alone by the lake. In his hand was the tiny walkman that he and Dobby had charmed to tape the Head Table during breakfast and lunch. He replayed the professors' conversations and smirked. So far, his plan was working. They were totally clueless, although Professor Flitwick sounded like trouble.

It was too bad that the Wizarding World was so blind and couldn't see their nose to spite their face. Well, I did shake up Hermione's world, maybe she'll come out of her books and shake hands with reality.

He looked up at the glorious colours that painted the evening sky. Lord Peter had come through for him once more. A hearing to sue for Harry's emancipation was scheduled during the Christmas hols. Professor Dumbledore still hadn't a clue about it and Harry hoped it

remained that way. A letter would be sent to the headmaster and Sirius at the last possible moment leaving them no time to thwart Lord Peter's efforts. They didn't need any mishaps.

Harry was torn when it came to his friends. Maybe he should forgive them? He was pretty sure he'd be called up to the Headmaster's Office relatively soon, on some pretext, and lectured on the ability to forgive. After all, everyone deserved a second chance, didn't they? Oh yeah, right. He could hear it all now.

Dobby popped in to hand Harry another letter. Seeing it was from Mr. Lovegood, Harry glanced around before he opened it.

"No one is around, Master Harry Potter, Sir," the house elf said. "I'se a good elf and made sure you would not be disturbed," Dobby said with a conspiratorial smile.

"Thank you Dobby. Has my request for more information about Delores Umbridge been delivered to Lord Peter?"

"Yes, Master Harry Potter, Sir. He says he will get back to you'se soon as he can."

"Thank you, Dobby." Harry dismissed his friend and turned his attention to the envelope in his hand. A small note and a larger letter fell from it when he opened it.

"Oliver," the note read, "this was sent to me, asking that I forward it on to you. I have checked it for tracking as well as portkey and hexing spells. It is a legitimate offer. I would advise you to think well on it. - Xeno Lovegood."

Harry gave a puzzled look at the other letter that had fallen out of the envelope.

Dear Mr. Twist,

Your first column was an eye opening article. In the past, I have been forced to reject many articles written by fellow Ravenclaws. They did not meet the Ministry's enforced mandates and so could not be published. The Ministry refuses to face facts, the world has moved on around us while we stagnate in the mire of tradition and ignorance.

From your letters and article published in the Quibbler, I am assuming that you are a fellow Ravenclaw. Your writings are well thought out and to the point. I have double-checked your facts and, sadly, found them to be accurate.

Now as to why I am writing to you. Recent events have freed some very disturbing restraints that were placed on the Daily Prophet. We are now under new management and the Ministry no longer has complete control on what we may, or may not, publish. Our new policy decrees that, 'all articles written for the Prophet must be backed up with hard core facts and evidence'. Something that has been lacking in the recent past.

Therefore, after reading your first by-line with our competitor and checking with your facts, I wish to offer you a chance to write for us as well. For the same fee and consideration that you are getting from the Quibbler, we would also like to run your articles.

You do not have to answer right now but we at the Daily Prophet would like to hear from you.

Sincerely

Lord Charles Witherspoon
Editor In Chief
The Daily Prophet

Harry read the letter over three times. It wasn't a joke. Maybe his plan would work after all.

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Many thanks for the reviews and suggestions. For those that think we tipped our hands too soon, all we can say is wait and see.

Happy Holiday! Until next time -GF and the Frau

Chapter 9: Fools or Slaves?

Dolores Umbridge quickly established her power base within the school. Everyone was terrified of her, even the professors seemed to fear for their jobs. They seemed to be oblivious to what was going on, but Harry doubted that. Come on, from what Harry knew the portraits and ghosts were terrible gossips. All one had to do was listen.

Harry knew, with his continuing insistence on Voldemort's return and the Ministry's strident denial of the same, it would only be a matter of time before she tried to have him expelled.

She'd had him in detention for over a week now and term had just started. His hand really hurt. The quill she made him use to write his lines didn't use ink. It actually gouged the lines into the back of his hand magically as he wrote on the parchment, causing the words to appear in his own blood. The writing was now etched so deeply into the back of his hand that Harry left each detention with a bloody rag tightly wrapped around it, trying to stem the flow of blood until he could get to his dorm and bandage it properly.

Harry knew he wasn't the only one to have detention with her and he was furious to think that other, possibly younger, students were being tortured as well. She seemed to be targeting anyone who wasn't a pure blood. Well, he would see about that. He needed to do some very discrete research before he could take steps.

'Wonder just what the wizarding world would think?' he mused painfully. 'A Ministry appointed teacher using an instrument of torture on sweet, innocent students? Maybe Oliver will have to question it.' His smirk was hidden by the shadows in the hall as he made his way to the Gryffindor dorm.

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Three weeks later, he was in the back of the library, beside him was his invisibility cloak and the Marauders map. Harry was in hiding. Since the first day of the new term almost a month ago, someone was always with him. He rarely got any time to himself and the only way he could was to sneak away.

It was only very late at night or when he could sneak away that he could work on some papers that Lord Peter had sent him, plus look over his bank statement from the Goblins. Like he was doing tonight. He really wished he didn't have to sneak but what else could he do? His 'minders', usually Ron and Hermione, stuck to him like lint on black wool. It was driving him crazy, and if they thought their clinging presence would drive him to forgive them, not bloody likely! If anything it was pushing them even farther apart. Still, there was an upside...he had a ready made alibi when people went looking for Oliver Twist! One supplied by the Headmaster himself!

Harry knew his mail was being screened. Thankfully, he had arranged that mail drop with Dobby as courier last spring. Harry would've been screwed otherwise.

He was still peeved that Dumbledore was keeping him ignorant of Wizarding Customs. However, the young wizard was no fool even if he was forced to play one. Lord Peter was filling that gap in Harry's education quite nicely. The Sorting Hat knew what it was doing when it said Harry would do well in the House of the Snakes.

It was going on midnight when Harry finished up his paperwork. He just had one more thing to do. Rubbing gently across his freshly scarred hand, Harry wrote a complaint to Lord Peter and one to the Goblins. It was illegal to use a dark artifact, such as a blood quill, on anyone under the age of 17 and even then it was only used to sign very important documents. Madam Dolores Umbridge was a Ministry Official and as such she should know the law better than most. Harry also provided date, time and incident documentation to further his complaint.

Picking up another blank parchment, Harry began to work on his column for this week. He was thankful his column came out only once a week. He didn't think he could, at this time, handle a daily one - too many ways for him to get caught. Thankfully, his deadline was Tuesdays, with a copy of the column from Xeno going to the Prophet for publication a day later.

He'd signed a contract with the Prophet, at the beginning of the school term, allowing them to carry his columns. However, while they were his secondary publisher, they would have to print the columns one day later as the Quibbler had an exclusive contract. The contract called for the same fee from the Prophet as that paid

by the Quibbler. Harry enjoyed the fact that he was paying himself and not getting caught!

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A week later, after breakfast, Dolores Umbridge was enjoying a second cup of tea in her office. Dozens of pictures of cats in all forms and sizes lined her office walls, most were dozing peacefully. One or two were slowly stretching and yawning. The toad-like woman smiled at her treasures. Everything pointed to it being a good day.

Last night had proven most satisfying as well, due to the fact she'd had that awful boy in her office doing lines. Dolores giggled. 'I made sure he got the point of the exercise,' she reflected. She'd made sure it was a very sharp and painful point. Her grandfather's pens really did come in handy. She had been surprised she'd been able to bring them to Hogwarts. So much for the vaunted wards Dumbledore touted.

The morning post arrived along with her copy of the Quibbler. She didn't have the clout just yet, but soon she would see about banning this rag! It was responsible for this whole mess. She would deal with the post first. She wasn't going to fritter away her good mood on that disgusting waste of print.

A few minutes later she was flipping through the Quibbler when she found Twist's article on the second page.

Is the Charter of Hogwarts Being Ignored?

In my foraging for an essay for my charms class, I came across an interesting book. It was a slim, worn and ragged volume tucked away and hidden on a shelf of forgotten volumes. It had been hand written by Helena Ravenclaw, the daughter of Rowena Ravenclaw, imagine that! One would think the school would take better care of its heirlooms.

To get back to the topic at hand. Did you know that she states the charter of Hogwarts has three basic mandates and they may never be over ridden or changed? According to the charter, if these mandates are not met, control of Hogwarts reverts to the founders' heir(s).

These mandates are:

- 1) No student, no matter how prestigious the blood line, pure, half or muggle born, shall be denied an education. Education is a right, not a privilege.
- 2) All instructors shall not, regardless of house affiliation, blood status, or familial relationship, favor one student over another. All students are equal while attending Hogwarts.
- 3) The Headmaster and the school instructors shall teach all aspects of their subject, be it Dark or Light Magic. Magic is about intent, and any magic can be used to harm. Teaching students to know that it is their intent which makes magic 'light', or 'dark' dispels misconceptions and separates myth from fact.

I have to wonder. How has Hogwarts drifted so far from these ideals? I mean, look at how the feud between the Gryffindors and Slytherins is so out of hand. It has reached the point where hexes are not uncommon in the halls between classes. And the tension is only escalating, what with the Headmaster putting these two houses together in class after class in a futile attempt to "promote inter-house unity". The professors are doing more refereeing in class some days than teaching if their complaints are any indication.

Also, since when are dark artifacts allowed in the castle to be used on students for punishment? I would not have known about it if I hadn't walked into two students rubbing their bloody hands and crying. They had deep gouges on the backs of their hands that were dripping blood. When asked, they said they had detentions with a professor and this was the result. They were too terrified to give the name of the instructor, but it wasn't hard to figure out if one just followed the drops of blood to the source. It would seem this professor has detention students write lines with a 'special' quill.

What is most surprising is that the Headmaster is allowing this, in the - " Safest place in wizarding Britain". Especially since his golden boy, Potter, seems to be getting an excessive amount of detentions this year with particular professor. I've even seen the Gryffindor rub his hand a few times. Surely these students are writing home about this? I know if my parents found out that someone was using a dark object on me, they would be up in arms.

Don't believe me? All you have to do is check the message boards in the common rooms. They list all detentions, time, student and with whom it must be served. And what makes things worse, why aren't the Heads of Houses doing something about it? According to the rules, they are to be notified when one of their students gets a detention.

Again, I am not naming names, libel laws and all. Wait! Are there libel laws in the Wizarding World? From some of the articles I've seen in the Prophet, libel is a foreign word to the Wizarding World.

However, getting back on topic, I have compiled a list of students that have had detentions this term. It lists the infraction, student name, professor involved and date and time of detention. If there is enough of a demand I could supply this list to the Quibbler and the Prophet. I will leave it up to more mature heads to decide if it gets published or not. Write and let me know.

Lastly, I don't know how much longer I will be allowed to write this column. A movement to suppress the Quibbler, and therefore me, is being conducted here at Hogwarts. I know I now share my column with the Quibbler and the Daily Prophet, so while I must be getting on someone's nerves, they'll have to go after the Prophet as well.

I guess what the muggle Claude Adrien Helvetius says is true. "To limit the press is to insult a nation; to prohibit reading of certain books is to declare the inhabitants to be either fools or slaves." Don't know who Helvetius is? Ask a muggle born. They had to study him in primary school.

-Oliver Twist

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The noise in the hallway outside Madam Umbridge's office came to a completely halt when a very loud screech echoed along its walls.

Severus Snape who happened by on his way to the Great Hall for breakfast paused. Madam Umbridge wrenched open her door and stormed past him not even acknowledging his presence. The imposing professor raised his eyebrow but said nothing as a small smirk ghosted along his lips. He didn't like the toad woman.

Anything to ruin that woman's day just made his. He continued in her wake with a lighter step.

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Great quote wasn't it? I wanted to use Winston Churchill but couldn't find one that fit. Frau even loved it.

The reviews are great and the suggestions are wonderful. We must caution everyone, this story is already written in rough draft. All it needs is touching up and correction.

This is a narrowly focused story about Harry's Slytherin side and people's impressions on Oliver Twist's written words. There won't be a lot of action, romance, or blood-shed. This is a study in character-development.

We know that the chapters are short, we plan them to be. We feel that we rather get the story across without adding a lot of filler.

Thanks again. Have a safe and Happy New Year! Until next time. - GF and the Frau

Chapter 10: Like Mother Like Son

An emergency staff meeting was held that Wednesday evening after dinner. Everyone attended except Dolores Umbridge, who had spent the day at the Ministry trying to mollify Fudge and get the Quibbler banned.

"Albus? Could this Twist be right? Is someone using a dark artifact on our students?" Pomona Sprout asked, looking warily at Minerva McGonagall, who was sitting beside the Headmaster, stewing over what was printed about her.

"I am not sure. The wards for the school should make that impossible without warning me at the very least." Albus said, with a sigh. "Mr. Twist made it quite obvious at whom he was pointing the finger of negligence."

Severus Snape sneered. "Just how did Mr. Twist find a copy of Helena Ravenclaw's book? I seem to remember it was reported missing over five years ago."

"Well, it looks like it has been found, doesn't it?" Filius asked, sipping his tea. "And if it was found where he claimed, then one must really wonder just how many other historical volumes have been, 'lost'

or misplaced."

"Where is Dolores? Shouldn't she be here?" Pomona asked barging into the conversation.

"Poppy? How many students came to you after her detentions?" Albus asked, ignoring her question for the moment.

"None, Albus," Poppy reported. "Although Hermione Granger did come to me asking for essence of Murtlap last week."

"Did she say who it was for?" Albus frowned over his teacup at her.

"No, but then she didn't have to. I knew it was probably for Mr. Potter. Poor child, he hates coming to me for anything."

"Well, can you blame him?" Pomona snorted.

"Did he come to you about his detentions Minerva?" Albus asked with some concern in his voice.

Minerva sighed. "Yes, he did, but only on one occasion."

"Well? What did he say, and how did you handle it...?" Albus quizzed.

"I didn't give him time to say much of anything. I had been dealing with another one of the twins' pranks and he caught me at a bad time," Minerva said, trying to excuse herself. She didn't look happy.

"I simply told him to keep his head down and try to avoid further conflict with Madam Umbridge."

"So you dismissed his complaint out of hand?" Severus sneered. "And here I thought you treasured your 'Little Lions', especially Potter!"

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Dolores look smug when she returned to Hogwarts late well after the staff meeting had ended. She'd just spent all day with Cornelius. He'd been easy enough to convince that the mad ramblings of disgruntled student should be ignored. After all, she'd noted with a simpering smile, any reply by the Ministry would only lend credence to Twist's drivel. He had nodded his agreement and reassured her that she was still his right hand at the school and would soon be promoted to High Inquisitor, giving her the power to make a difference.

Even Lucius Malfoy had reassured Cornelius that this insanity would come to nothing when queried about the article. It would die down in a day or so, he was sure of it The Wizzarding World was far too intelligent to believe the, 'verbal tantrums' of Oliver Twist.

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As the students of Hogwarts were sitting down for a quiet breakfast the next day, Cornelius Fudge was getting howlers, mail and visits from very irate parents. They were screaming about not only the safety of there children, but about having to pay for a second-rate

education. Many had pureblood ties and had supported him in the last election. It would seem many students had taken Twist's advice about the detentions and sent letters, as well as photo evidence, home. Dolores and Albus had forgotten to have the owlery sealed before she left for the day.

Amelia Bones along, with several Aurors stormed into the Ministers office that afternoon. "Cornelius. A word."

Cornelius reached into his desk and pulled out a calming draught.

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That evening, Amelia Bones, along with a team of Aurors and several parents with their family solicitors, apparated to Hogsmeade and descended on Hogwarts.

Dinner was just ending when they marched through the great hall doors. A startled Albus Dumbledore stood to address them. "May we help you Madam Bones?" He asked, blue eyes losing their customary twinkle.

"Yes, Headmaster, you may. I have a warrant for the arrest of Dolores Umbridge. . . ." Amelia started to say when the student body broke into a chorus of cheers and whistles. Madam Umbridge stood up, her face red with fury. Her loud throat clearings was effectively drowned out by the students.

A loud crack and flare of magic startled everyone into silence. "Pray continue, Madam Bones," Albus said.

"As I was saying, I have a warrant for the arrest of one Dolores Umbridge, for the torture of students under her care. Several parents have filed complaints about the the use of a dark artifact on their children. So, I would like all students who have had detentions with her to stand. . . ." Amelia ordered as many students, in all houses except Slytherin, stood up. She and her aurors counted over 20 and noted that Harry Potter was among them.

"For Merlin's sake! Tell me Albus how did you not know what was going on? You are supposed to be the greatest wizard of our time and Master of the Wards of Hogwarts! How could you not know?" Amelia sputtered as her Aurors took Umbridge into custody while

several parents and their Barristers began to pull individual students away to question them.

Albus Dumbledore wisely kept his mouth closed

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"Mr. Potter," Filius called from on top of his stack of books as the Charm class was letting out. It was a week after the article about the use of blood quills

at Hogwarts. The ensuing furor it caused had finally died down a bit and now it seemed that everyone was holding their breath—waiting for the next shoe to drop, as it were.

"Yes sir?" Harry looked up, startled..

"There is something I wish to discuss with you. Can you meet with me after your last class this afternoon?"

"Yes Sir," Harry said, a puzzled frown on his face as he packed his books into his bag.

Late that afternoon a nervous Harry knocked on the Charms Professor's door. Thankfully he had managed to slip away from Ron and Hermione after their last class. He surely didn't want them waiting for him to 'discuss' whatever Professor Flitwick had to say.

"Come to in to my office, Harry, this shouldn't take long," invited the Charms Professor's squeaky voice.

Harry entered the cluttered office and smiled. This room had Professor Flitwick's personality all over it. It was scaled to his small stature, though it did contain chairs for his more normal sized visitors.

With a wave of his hand, Filius Flitwick closed his office door and Harry felt a powerful privacy ward go up. "There, we won't be heard. Have a seat, Harry, or should I say Mister Twist?" Filius smiled, going around to the chair behind his desk.

Harry flinched slightly. He continued his study of the office walls with their rows of dueling plaques and trophies. He wondered how he

was going to bluff his way out of this. "I don't know what you are talking about, sir," he said slowly turning to face his professor.

"It is a known fact, Harry," Filius explained as he leaned back into his chair, steeping his fingers, "that a truly competent teacher can, over time, recognize the writing style of their students. No matter how well disguised said student thinks it. Style, tone and even the rhythm of a student's writing can be recognized, thus identifying them. This talent is most useful as it helps cut down on cheating during exams."

"And how does that make me Oliver Twist?" Harry asked causally, leaning against the book case, but inside he knew he was dead. The game was up, he was going to be in so much hot water! He knew that several people wanted his head as Oliver not to mention as the Boy Who Lived as well.

"Have a seat Harry," Filius offered.

Harry took the offered seat with a pained groan and did the only thing he could do, wait for the axe to fall.

"I knew your mother well and was in fact, her mentor and Charms Master when she apprenticed under me. She had a brilliant mind," the small professor said wistfully. "I will admit I was looking forward to teaching you, until I saw your first essay homework. Your handwriting was atrocious, and your execution of thought on paper was very slipshod. I was horrified that someone as brilliant as Lily Evans could produce such a mediocre child. . ."

"But sir. . ." Harry protested.

"Let me finish, child," Filius said, holding up a hand. "Then, after I found a rough copy of one of your assignments on the floor and compared it to the finished product you handed in, I realized that you were dumbing down you homework! Imagine my surprise when later in the year you let slip a few other things that caught my eye. It seemed odd that a child who was intelligent enough to use magic as well as you do would be so lacking in other areas. It just didn't add up. Surely, I thought, you do have a brain. Why weren't you using it? Then I realized that you were, just not in the way we expected! I am well aware of the fact that your friend Miss Granger prides herself on being top student, and Mr. Weasley has a problem with jealousy."

He continued with a heavy sigh. " I came to the conclusion that their friendship means more to you than academic excellence. This is why I haven't pushed you to do better in my class."

Harry hung his head and waited. His heart was pounding. He just knew he was going to be expelled. Dumbledore had all but promised he would do so if he ever caught the one known as Oliver Twist.

"I have watched you child ever since you arrived here. When I realized what was going on, I couldn't say anything as no one would have believed me. You have covered your tracks well, too well in some cases. The other professors had already formed their opinions of you and they seemed more or less set in stone."

Harry peeked through his bangs at the professor and found only concern and a bit of amusement. "What do you mean sir, why have you kept my secret?" Harry asked.

Filius sighed and shrugged. "You must realize that Albus only keeps me on as I am a very renown Duelist and Charms Master. Add to that my connections to Gringotts. The ministry can not dismiss me, even if they wanted to, it would cause all kinds of headaches between them and the Goblins as I've been here long enough to have tenure."

Filius paused for a moment looking at his student. Harry looked up into the professor's eyes with dawning hope.

"I think you were sorted into the wrong house, Mr. Potter," Filius said with a smile, changing the subject. "I believe Severus would've been horrified at a Slytherin Potter, but that's besides the point, you show the best attributes of that house. I believe you would have made an outstanding Slytherin or perhaps, a Ravenclaw. I applaud you on your abilities. With the courage of Gryffindor, cunning of Slytherin and intelligence of Ravenclaw, you will make a fine duelist when you come of age."

"You mean if I survive to come of age, don't you?" Harry asked with some bitterness.

Filius paused, then nodded. "Quite right, my boy. Quite right." The professor sighed, bringing the conversation back around to the topic at hand. "Now about these articles. Like I said, a good instructor

knows the writing style of his student. I must admit it did take me several reads of various letters and articles before I was sure it was you.

"I've had Ravenclaws in the past who tried to protest through the printed word, but failed. There is something about the Ravenclaw mentality that drives them to put too many dry facts and numbers in their writing, almost as if they wish to cram the facts down their reader's throat in one large lump. They don't seem to understand that not everyone loves dry statistics, that they should try a trickle, and not a flood."

The diminutive professor nodded his head. "You have a good grasp on giving your facts and statistics in smaller, more easily absorbed morsels that the average witch or wizard can comprehend. Your first simple letter came at the right time, with just enough impact to make people take notice. I salute you, Mr. Potter," Filius said, rising from his chair to bow to the astounded boy before him.

Harry blushed. "I uh what happens now?"

"Nothing as of yet," Filius said with a smile, returning to his chair. "I know for a fact that no other instructor has figured it out." He chuckled quietly. "In fact, they are taking bets on who it is and your name isn't even in the betting pool. No Mr. Potter, your secret is quite safe. Now then, the reason why I asked you here. I will be giving you some additional help with statistics and little known facts as you need them . . . in secret of course."

"But why?" Harry looked up, stunned. He knew he couldn't trust his Head of House. She had never been there for him, even when he went to her for help. Last week he went to complain about his detentions and she simply told him to, " Keep your head down, Mr. Potter and avoid detention." And Snape? he snorted in his mind.

"For your mother's sake and for yours, child. There have been too many secrets hidden for far too long. It's about time someone opened the curtains and let the light in."

Harry came away from the meeting with Professor Flitwick with hope. It was too bad that he hadn't approached this professor years ago but he hadn't known who to trust then as well as now. At least, now, he would give the man the benefit of a doubt.

So they were taking bets on who Twist was? Harry almost cackled with glee. He wondered if the twins were taking bets among the students as well. Anything for a quick quid, hey?

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As some of you know already, my parents were in a fatal accident just after Christmas. My father, a wonderful man of 83, was killed instantly while my mother (78) was seriously injured. As the oldest child, I have been tasked with all arrangements. So this story and the others just are not a priority at this time.

The reviews we are getting have been interesting and thought provoking. As many have said, these chapters are too small. Well, do something about it. Tell us what you want to see. Give us some suggestions. We may or may not use them, but we appreciate all of them.

As for the complaints of super Harry, it isn't going to happen. He is intelligent but not a genius. He is rich but not on Bill Gates or Donald Trumps scale. He is a survivor and doesn't like notoriety.

Thanks for the reviews. They add a healing balm while sitting with my mother in the hospital.

Until next time. -GenkaiFan and the Frau.

Chapter 11: The Point Being?

Harry put down his copy of the Quibbler. Change was slow in coming, but from the increasing numbers of letters to the editor questioning everything from the quality of education to the lack of a trial for Sirius Black, it was creeping in. Granted the pace wasn't as fast as he would have liked, but it was there. The Prophet no longer sought to destroy his reputation since the switch to 'new' management. It was a relief. At least he wasn't being called an attention getting brat anymore.

There had been no sign of old snake face since last spring. It seemed he was keeping quiet, trying to convince everyone the Ministry was right in denying his return. Well, there was nothing Harry could do about that and truth be told, Harry welcomed the peace. As far as he was concerned Voldie could lay even lower . . . like six feet lower in fact.

Sirius was away again on some useless mission for Dumbledore. Harry figured that the old coot was deliberately keeping them apart. It wouldn't do to have Sirius close by, Merlin forbid, the man might just pursue the matter of his innocence or worse, try for custody. Harry rubbed a hand through his messy hair. How he hated waiting, and he'd heard nothing from Lord Peter on this matter in a while.

A heavy sigh crossed his lips. It seemed that the quieter Voldemort was, the less peaceful Harry's sleep. Lately there were dreams about a long corridor with a lot of doors. Harry looked it up in his divination books and didn't like the interpretations he found there.

One interpretation was the hallway was a new opportunity and could signal spiritual enlightenment. 'Huh!' he huffed mentally. 'A new path? Oh right, I wonder where it leads and just what, or who, I'll find at its end! Wonder if it forks? I have a senile, meddling old coot at one end that thinks of nothing but running my life and a megalomaniac trying his best to end said life. Some pathway.'

'Somehow,' he mused, 'I don't think that's what these dreams mean. Oh well.' Harry looked at the time and groaned. If he hurried he had just enough time to get to Snape's office for his first Occlumency lesson, or as Dumbledore refers to it, his "remedial potions" lesson. He wasn't looking forward to his time with the greasy git and just had a feeling these lessons were doomed to failure from the get go.

Harry stood, shouldering his book bag and began his weary way to the dungeons. He flinched when he heard a familiar voice call out behind him.

"Oi mate! There you are. I been lookin' for you." Ron's grating cheerfulness washed over Harry as he turned to respond to his friend.

"Hello Ron, sorry I can't stop to natter. Got to get to my remedial potions," Harry explained with disgust. " But, if you want to join me . . .?"

"S'ok mate. Wouldn't want to get in your way!" Ron replied with a shudder. " Guess I'll leave you to it then. See you later in the common room?"

Harry's only answer was a brief wave over his shoulder as he disappeared down the stair. 'Hmmm, maybe Snape does have his uses,' he thought.

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Later that night Harry begged off the chess game that Ron tried to coax him to play, claiming a screaming headache. He retired to their dorm room, jumped into bed, pulled his curtains and sealed them with privacy spells. Then he drew out parchment and ink and set work with a shaking hand.

"Dear Lord Peter,

I am happy to say I will be able to attend the meeting you have set up before the Winter hols. I look forward to finally being free of Dumbledore's manipulations.

Currently he is forcing me to take Occlumency lessons with Professor Snape. Please understand, if I were actually getting lessons in the mind arts, I would not be upset. However, I am not.

My so called first lesson consisted of Professor Snape standing me up in the middle of the room, pointing his wand at my head and shouting, "Clear your mind, Potter!" followed immediately by, "Legillimens!"

He then expected me to throw him out of my mind. How? I have no idea as Professor Snape never gave me any instructions. Nor has he given me material to study the theory involved. Before my first lesson, I looked for books discretely in the school library and found none on the shelves.

Tonight was the first lesson and I am currently have a blinding headache with no relief. I was unable to make it to the infirmary before curfew. Please forgive the shakiness of my hand in penning this.

I have no idea on how to go about remedying this situation. I don't want to tip my hand too soon, but any help you could offer on this matter would be most appreciated, and my head would feel a lot better.

HJP

The next morning, Harry had a note by Lord Peter waiting for him along with vials of head ache and stomach soothing potions.

Dear Lord Harry,

Your note was delivered by your very irate house elf. Please take the potions along with this note. They should help somewhat. Also please note:

According to Wizarding Law, for either Headmaster Dumbledore, or Professor Snape, to teach you this technique, they must have written permission from your legal and magical guardians and even then, it must be taught by a licensed Legilimens who has signed a magical oath to not reveal anything they accidentally discover in said student's mind. I highly doubt either one of them met these criteria from the research I was able to do.

Again, your rights, it seems, are of no consequence. From your description of your first class with Professor Snape, he has been antagonistic and vicious in his verbal abuse towards you. The good professor has made it his business to make your life at Hogwarts as unpleasant as possible. And therefore, is an unsuitable teacher for such an advance area of Magic.

Have no fear. I will procure a more compatible tutor in this field for you. For now, do nothing we can not risk exposure at this time.

PFA

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The school was calmer now that the toad was gone from Hogwarts. After Twist's column came out, the Board of Governors got an earful from irate parents and other family members. Many letters for allowing such a psychotic torturer to bring dark artifacts to school. Dozens more for allowing the Ministry to send such an incompetent instructor to teach a core subject. It turned out that Umbridge didn't have a Mastery, or even an 'O' on her NEWTS in the subject. Even worse, she'd failed the course altogether when she had attended Hogwarts. She was passable as a Charms tutor in which she got a EE, and even that was being questioned by the Board.

Amelia Bones had, upon searching, found several Blood Quills in the woman's desk. How they got past the wards no one knew.

Cornelius Fudge had distanced himself from Dolores Umbridge when the story broke in the Prophet. The last anyone knew she was currently awaiting trial. It was, in public opinion, a given that she would be sent to Azkaban. Of course, that left the DADA position open.

Amelia Bones had offered an auror who was currently restricted to light duty due to spell damage as a temporary DADA replacement. Harry was relieved that Auror Edward Johnston, Angelina's cousin, was a decent instructor. He really didn't have the time to start a dueling club like Hermione had been pushing for.

Now, all Harry had to deal with were Snape's lessons, the reoccurring dreams and ol' Riddle. His work was never done.

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Everyone eagerly awaited for the weekly delivery of the Quibbler as the owls swooped in with the morning mail. It looked like almost every student in the hall got a paper. For a few minutes little could be heard but the rustling of papers. Then it began.

Students started grumbling and glaring at the Head Table. Professors McGonagall and Snape didn't disappoint when they stood and started shouting at each other.

Hermione sat in shocked silence as Neville read that mornings' article aloud.

The Point Being?

Last time I pointed out the fact that Dolores Umbridge was totally unsuited to teach. This time around I will discuss other weaknesses on the staff of Hogwarts.

First I would draw attention to a Professor, one who should have long ago gone to his rest.

Professor Binns has long been established as the Professor of Wizarding History here at Hogwarts. While he may have been a good instructor at one time, this is no longer true. You see, he is a ghost and it seems death has done him no favors. He has been stuck on teaching the Goblin Wars since I became a student. Not to say they aren't important mind you, but I personally think there is a much richer tapestry to our history than just that one subject.

I have several questions for the administration of Hogwarts. Did someone neglect to mention to Professor Binns he had died? Is he still paid a salary? Could he pass the test for teaching certification if it was given him? Is Hogwarts administration too cheap, if he is not paid, or too lazy to hire a competent instructor for History?

As it now stands, I would venture 95%+ of the students consider History of Magic as either a free period or nap time. We learn far more of History studying on our own . . . if we did not we would never pass our History OWLS and NEWTS. And our parents pay for this?

Another sad excuse for a professor is the Divination Professor, Sybil Trelawney. Going to her class can be very entertaining if she is in one of her prediction modes.

Entertaining that is if you are not the one who's death she is foretelling. A pool is going around at the number of times she will

predict Potter's death this year. Last year it figured out to 245 times and Potter is still with us.

Let us not forget that her classroom smells cloyingly of incense and she, herself, of sherry. Very unprofessional, if you ask me.

Lastly, another Professor who knows his subject forwards, backwards and inside out, but is incapable of effectively conveying that knowledge to his students in a positive and encouraging manner is Professor Severus Snape.

Professor Snape, while an admitted genius and one of the premier Potions Masters in the world, is totally unsuited to teach the subject. Like many of genius level, Professor Snape has neither the patience nor the understanding to teach young people this most exacting and demanding art.

His frustration at having to deal with pupils he considers 'ignorant dunderheads', leads to daily vituperative rants containing cruel and degrading insults that discourage and shame his students. His juvenile tantrums, bordering on bullying, make his classes the most dreaded and hated in school.

This in turn leads to the destruction of the desire to pursue advanced potions study in most of his pupils. Unfortunately, every student lost to his brutal verbal assaults and bullying means one less Auror, Healer, or future Potions Master.

The only students exempt from this sadistic behavior are the Slytherins. This is because of the extremely biased favoritism he shows his own House, Slytherin.

If you were to check the points deducted from all of his classes for the past seven years the acute discrepancies between Slytherin and the other three Hogwarts houses would be most noticeable. Don't believe me? Write the Headmaster and ask for a copy of all disciplinary actions (detentions, points taken, etc.) taken for specific years. He is required by Wizarding Law and the Hogwarts Charter to provide a certified copy.

It is your right to have information pertaining to your child as a concerned parent/guardian of a Hogwarts student, past or present. In fact, according to the charter, all parents/guardians are required

to be notified by owl promptly when a student faces any disciplinary action, or is injured on school grounds. This holds true for all students, muggle-born, half blood or pureblood.

Speaking of points. I have a copy of the points taken since Potter has been at Hogwarts. The numbers are laughable, so laughable it is pathetic.

For the past seven years (including the five that Potter has attended) read thus:

Professor Snape has taken points off for breathing too loudly, asking questions, not asking questions, sneezing, and tardiness even a note. Percentage wise Gryffindor earned the most points taken and the least points given. Hufflepuff comes in second for points taken and third for least points given. Ravenclaw comes in third for points taken and second points given. Slytherins seldom had any points taken, even if they were clearly in the wrong (even with witnesses) and are given unearned points, sometimes for something as simple as chopping an ingredient properly (even if they were doing nothing at the time)!

Did you know, The Booke of Discipline lists every point given and taken, House affiliation, Professor involved, and the reason for the action. And here is the kicker, Headmaster Dumbledore has to sign off on all actions be it points given or taken and detentions on a daily basis, so he has to know what's happening. He can not plead ignorance.

In the past ten years Professor Snape leads in the number of points deducted. Of the many points deducted from Gryffindor, Professor Snape is responsible for almost 90+ percent. Professor McGonagall comes in second and is responsible in points deducted from Slytherin by 65%+.

In Potter's first year, Slytherin was clearly in the lead for the House Cup until the leaving feast, when the headmaster gave all those points to Potter and his cronies for "service to the school." It caused the House Cup to go from Slytherin to Gryffindor by a margin of less than 30 points. It was the first time in several years that Gryffindor has won the Cup. It was the first time in decades that the Headmaster awarded that many points to one house.

The House of Snakes has yet to regain the Cup even with the war of points going on.

Makes one wonder just who is winning the House Cup and why? Doesn't it? Let us not forget each year, the Sorting Hat calls for House Unity. How can there be House Unity with all animosity this going on?

-Oliver Twist

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I wish to thank everyone for the well wishes and prayers for my parents. My mother is home and healing well. I am now commuting back and forth as needed so updates aren't going to be as often as Frau and I wish. The other stories are still going to be worked on as we have time. We haven't forgotten them.

To the one reviewer who reviewed in Chapter 1, that scoffed at the mention of Freedom of the Press, you are right you have to the right to click on the little red box in the right top corner of your screen. We aren't going to stop you. Despite your negative review, we are going to continue as we are, writing for the fun of it.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 12: On A Mission

Tom Riddle, also known as Lord Voldemort, was holding court in the Grand Ball Room of Malfoy Manor. Clutched tightly in his shaking hand was a copy of yesterday's Prophet.

"Luciusss, my faithful follower. Why wassss I not told about this Oliver Twissst and his malisssssousssss writimg?" the Dark Lord hissed angrily. "How long hasss he been writing to the Prophet, and why wasssssssn't I told?"

Lucius Malfoy, Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Malfoy, wasn't a stupid man. He knew there was no way he could put the blame on anyone else for this lapse in information, nor could he safely direct the Dark Lord's attention away from him since he was the only other person in the room.

"My lord," Lucius said humbly, hoping that he could appease his lord. "This Twist hasn't been writing for the Prophet long. His articles, until now, were only published in that nuisance rag The Quibbler. When I saw his column in the Prophet, I checked and found they are under new management. The people we have on the staff there have their hands tied. They have to do what the owners wish or risk exposure. . ."

"Crucio!"

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Hogwarts was in turmoil. No one knew who Oliver Twist was. Many rumors were floating about his identity as well as demands that he give himself up. The Weasley twins were running a betting pool. The odds were currently favoring some bloke in Ravenclaw. Harry Potter's name wasn't even in the running.

Harry snickered to himself as he relaxed into the overstuffed chair he was sitting in. He had sequestered himself in the Room of Requirements. Dobby had shown Harry this room when he asked him for someplace to hide from everyone. It was a lot better than trying to hide out in the library where anyone wandering through could stumble on him.

No one would believe that any of the disparaging remarks made about him in the articles were actually penned by Harry himself. It was a brilliant bit of subterfuge. The only reason Professor Flitwick managed to figure it out was because he recognized Harry's writing style.

Speaking of the Charms Professor, Harry had to hand it to him. He had pointed Harry to the whereabouts of The Booke of Detentions and it hadn't been hard to find.

The library book was officially only available for seventh years, something about being available to aid in filling out job applications. Harry had managed to use his invisibility cloak and the Marauders Map to locate the book after curfew.

One pile of parchment and a quick copy spell (taught by the Charms Professor) and Harry was set. Professor Flitwick then generously added the self-updating charms and keyed Harry into it. Viola! No one thought to check to see if anyone had removed it from the library until after the column was published. By then it was too late.

Harry chuckled as he flipped through the book. It was amazing how often students at the school got up to no good. He found some of the reasons given for detentions and taking points very amusing.

"Master Harry Potter, sir," Dobby's voice broke into Harry's thoughts. The ever eager house elf was holding up the little walkman. "They's done with the staff meeting, Master Harry Potter, sir. Dobby done what you's ask and placed the talkie thing under the table before the meeting and tooks it after the professors was gone."

"Thanks Dobby, you did great!" Harry laughed at his hyper friend as he turned the little machine on.

Dumbledore's voice started the recording. "Now that we are all here. Does any one have any idea on how Mr. Twist found a copy of our detention records?"

"Is that all you are worried about Albus?" came McGonagall's voice. "We all know that a self-updating copy is available in the library, and only the seventh years have access to that part of the restricted section. No, the question we must address here is how did things get so out of control?"

"That's easy, Minerva," came Snape's voice. "We all know that our illustrious headmaster has always favored the bloody Gryffindors. Ever since they arrived here first year, Potter and his cohorts have ruled the roost, just like the brats' father and his pack before him."

"Beware, Severus, I checked the facts before this meeting," Flitwick said. "and Mr. Twist is quite correct in his figures. The point system here at Hogwarts has been a laughable exercise in futility for years. It only works if students care enough about house pride. If it is abused it loses its effectiveness and becomes divisive. It only serves to create and maintain house rivalry."

Professor Sprout broke in, "If Minerva isn't taking points off the Slytherins, its you doing it to the other houses, especially the Gryffindors. With Minerva, points she takes are reasonable, yours aren't. Points off for breathing too loud? Really Severus!"

Filius sneered. "Honestly Severus, for all your bitter protests about what unholy terrors James Potter and his friends were, you seem to be returning tit for tat to his son! In my opinion, you've become what you most hate, a bully!"

Harry snickered. Way to go Professor! He could picture the small being standing rigidly on his chair as he delivered his rant.

"People please! Filius sit down. Severus, enough!" roared Dumbledore's voice.

A silent pause then the headmaster spoke, "I must admit I am as worried about this as you are. Mr. Twist likes to air our failings in public. These attacks on the school have to stop! And I want Mr. Potter kept out of the press for his own safety."

"And what does Mr. Potter have to say about all this?" came Professor Sprout's voice.

"Surprisingly very little," McGonagall sighed. "He refuses to speak to me on any matter aside from class work. He said I had my chance to stop his 'torture.' The day after they took that woman out of the Great hall, Harry told me he would be speaking to a barrister about possible charges against both the school and the Ministry."

"Minerva! Stall him! He mustn't . . ." Dumbledore gasped.

"Any why not? It is his right," interrupted Flitwick's squeaky voice. "Or are you saying that Mr. Twist is correct in his assumption and Mr. Potter's rights are to be trampled upon at will?"

"No, no! Nothing like that!" The Headmaster hurriedly declared. "I meant it would look bad for the school if Mr. Potter involves a barrister and the court in internal matters, after all, the problem has been solved."

"You mean it would look bad for you as Headmaster and Head of the Wizengamot if Mr. Potter's barrister files charges?"

'Interesting,' Harry mused. 'Dumbledore seems more worried about me contacting a barrister than he is about the fact that his school is falling apart.'

"Are there any clues on who this Oliver Twist is? What do we know so far?" asked Professor Sprout once more interrupting several minutes of garbled arguing.

"Well, we know he is very intelligent and very logical in his thinking," stated Professor Flitwick. "And so far he has stuck to facts that are provable."

"He has proven he is cunning, protecting himself by stating what is rumor and what can be substantiated as fact," said Snape. "He could well be a Slytherin with his subtle approach. And he hates Potter."

"No, he doesn't. He may poke fun at Potter's perceived image, but not at Mr. Potter himself," McGonagall snapped. "I would say Mr. Twist could be in any house, even Hufflepuff."

"Why do you say that, Minerva?" asked Professor Sprout.

"Look at his pointing out fair play. And his quote by that muggle person, about limiting freedom. That is a distinctly Hufflepuff trait. So he's as logical and intelligent as a Ravenclaw, cunning as a Slytherin in not using his real name, he's all about fair play and equality, as a Hufflepuff and he's bold and daring like a Gryffindor. Did I miss anything?" McGonagall asked.

"And let's not forget he's probably a muggle born. The way you talk it sounds like there might be more than one person writing," Professor Flitwick stated.

"I'm coming to the conclusion that just maybe there is," Minerva agreed.

"Then do you think that Mr. Twist is a male or female or both?" Dumbledore asked.

"That I could not say," Minerva replied.

Harry crowed with laughter as he shut off the tape. This was just too brilliant!

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Hermione was on a mission. Harry wasn't really speaking to her this year, he seemed to like to go off on his own more and more. This was so like Harry. Well at least like the Harry she had built up in her mind. She was determined to get to the bottom of it. Sure, she knew he was still peeved about not contacting him over the summer, but it's not like she could disobey a direct order from Albus Dumbledore. He had said it wasn't safe and Harry could've, should've been able to contact her. Shouldn't he?

Was it possible Harry was still reeling from the Tournament? But that was last year! Of course, Cedric did die. Ron said that Harry suffered from terrible nightmares all the way up to the Leaving Feast. She frowned. Ron hadn't mentioned that Harry was still having them. Maybe Harry's relatives got him the help he needed? She sure hoped so, but she doubted it. The few times Harry let scraps of information slip about his relatives, it hadn't been good.

She needed to find out what and where Harry was hiding. She needed to get him to start talking to her. She felt like she had lost something very precious to her over the summer. And Merlin take it all! She was going to get it back!

She would make him talk to her, if it was the last thing she ever did.

"Hey Ron," she called to the red head as he entered the Common Room. "Have you seen Harry lately?"

"No, Hermione, not since lunch, the prat," Ron said plopping down on the couch facing the fireplace beside her.

She sighed, hugging a throw pillow to her. "I wonder where he disappears to. This so like him to push us away."

"Well, it's no use trying to get the Map. He keeps it on him all the time, the bloody git," Ron replied, rubbing his chin. "I tried following him once but he gave me the slip."

Ginny came over and sat by her brother's feet on the carpet. "Are you talking about Harry?"

"Yea," Ron said, looking down at his sister. "'Mione's worried about the bloody arse. He doesn't hang around us anymore."

Ginny shrugged. "Well considering how we treated him over the summer, I can't blame him."

"What do you mean how we treated him? What about how he's treating us!" Hermione exclaimed.

Ginny shrugged. "I was thinking about that. He didn't have Hedwig. So that means we couldn't receive mail from him."

Hermione interjected, "There are muggle ways, after all. His relatives wouldn't take his post, would they? I did give him my parent's address."

"He was feeling pretty down about Cedric," Ginny muttered. "but he refuses to talk about it. We weren't there when he needed us. We were suppose to be his friends."

"But Dumbledore said. . . " Hermione started to say.

"And we all see how well that turned out, don't we?" Ginny snapped, turning her head to look up at Hermione.

"He's an adult and he cares about Harry's well being," Hermione argued. " He was trying to keep him safe!"

"Really? Or does he care more for the fact that Harry is the Boy-Who-Lived?" Ginny countered, angrily. "Something is off. If Dumbledore cared so much, why did he put Harry in with his relatives without any means of communication? How safe was that?"

Hermione snapped her mouth shut. She didn't have answers to these questions as the argument she had with Harry at Grimmauld's Place replayed in her mind. She still felt she hadn't done anything wrong.

Ginny shrugged. "I can't blame Harry. He has never trusted adults and has always gone with what he felt was right. We betrayed his trust and you know Harry, he doesn't give his trust easily, or often."

Ron nodded, looking a bit forlorn. "I know. Remember last year? I betrayed him and he's forgiven me for that, but I think it'll be a long time before he forgets. I mean, he still hangs around me, it's just not the same between us anymore. I don't think he's talked to me about anything outside class work since then."

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Severus Snape was in a royal snit as he paced back and forth in his office like a caged animal. Ever since this Oliver Twist wrote that blasted article about house points and teaching abilities, he was now interrogated by the other heads of houses as to his policy for administering points. It seems they all blamed him for making the point system a laughable waste of time and effort.

Even Albus was questioning him more. This had to stop! He had enough on his plate without having his judgment questioned by such ridiculous slander.

He had even fired off a letter to the Twist brat, threatening to sue for libel. The reply that was sent back told him to go ahead. All he had to do was to prove one unauthenticated, and thereby slanderous, remark was made. Of course, he couldn't. In fact, the article in question had complemented him on his skills as a Potions Master. The reply also stated Twist had only printed the facts from Ministry and ICW records.

Picking up his tea cup, Severus Snape pitched it across the room, watching as it shattered against the far wall.

"Severus, have I caught you at a bad time?"

Severus swirled around. "Albus! You know better then to sneak up on me. What if I had been brewing?"

"Ah, but you weren't, my boy. So, have I come at a bad time?" Albus asked, stepping into the potions master's office, surveying the damage.

"Oh no, headmaster. Come in, make yourself comfortable." Severus Snape snarked sarcastically.

"Why thank you I will, my boy," Albus said with a smile and a twinkle in his eye, making himself comfortable. "I have need to ask you if you have any ideas on this Twist situation."

A roar of rage echoed through the dungeons, causing many of the Slytherins to freeze shivering in mid-stride.

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Frau and I are so glad you all enjoyed the last chapter. We do feel like we have to mention a few things from the reviews.

We are NOT bashing anyone. We are trying to portray the Golden Trio as teenagers with the exception of Harry, who is more mature than some of his teachers. We aren't trying to split the Trio, we just find it hard to understand why they are still together after they abandoned Harry after the Tri-Wizzen.

This isn't an evil Dumbledore or a manipulative one, just senile and too set in his ways, believing in his own press releases.

To all of our readers: please keep in mind, we are just little old ladies having fun and have no political agenda. Our writing is fiction and AU. If you want canon, we suggest you reread JKR's series.

Please also note, that this story is mostly done. I wrote it during NaNoWri and now, Frau and I are editing and filling out each chapter

as we go. Your wonderful suggestions and comments are greatly appreciated, some have even guess how this story is going to fall.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 13: Part of the Problem

Harry was thumbing through the book on Occlumency that Lord Peter had sent him along with a letter. He must be doing something right if Professor Snape hadn't picked up anything about Oliver Twist during their so-called lessons.

The dark haired teen smiled. Of course both barrister and teen agreed on one thing, for some reason Dumbledore seemed to want Harry to fail at Occlumency. Why else would he, a master occlumens himself, allow Snape to use such a brutal and ineffective method? Not to mention the fact he was having Harry taught by someone that hated him when he knew full well the level of trust needed between teacher and student.

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Harry was having a hard time deciding what to write about in his next article. He had been hitting them pretty hard and fast lately and was pleased with the results. From what Dobby told him, the headmaster's desk was buried under a mountain of mail.

The day after his last column, the Great Hall was inundated with post and howlers directed to Snape and Trelawney. Students as well as staff members were forced to flee from the assault of owls and the general mayhem caused by the exploding howlers. Dumbledore had no choice but to declare a free day as the house elves were desperately trying to keep up with the mess. Many of the staff decided to hide in their offices.

The following day Harry learned from Dobby that Hogwarts wards had always directed all post for the Headmaster to his office as not to disturb him at meal times. The howlers had driven him as well as Fawkes, and all of the paintings of past headmasters from the office. Harry giggled and wished he had witnessed the spectacle. He could not imagine the devastation after the howlers had exploded.

Amidst of all of the howlers directed to the Great hall, several owls with angry red letters flew around in confusion until they exploded mid-air. The howlers had to go off undelivered causing many of the poor owls to lose precious tail feathers in the process.

Most notable among them was the one by sent by Molly Weasley. Her voice easily out-shouted everyone else's. Seems those where howlers sent to Oliver Twist and the owls knew that Twist was in the Great Hall but could not find him. Molly's piercing, vindictive harangue lasted a good half hour by which time the Great Hall was empty.

Harry laughed all the way to the Gryffindor Common Room. Thank goodness for Dobby's house elf magic. It had rendered Oliver invisible to post owls. All mail was suppose to go to his postal box at Gringotts anyways.. How any mail for Oliver managed to be delivered to the Great Hall was beyond Harry's understanding.

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Turning his attention to today's paper, Harry saw in the Prophet, that Sirius was now free. He had been cleared of all wrong doing and freed, with monetary reparations to follow.

Madam Umbridge was facing time in Azkaban and Fudge was on his way out after a vote of no confidence. Maybe it was time to rattle ol' Snake face's cage, but how, without giving himself away? Hmm...

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Sirius Black looked down at his pardon. He was finally free! His name has been cleared of all wrong doing. He didn't know what to do first, get down on his knees and thank Merlin, kiss Amelia Bones and offer his services at stud, or maybe run naked through the ministry while painted red. Hmm. . . James would have liked to see that.

In all of his wild musing on what to do about his new freedom, he didn't once think about Harry, nor did the fact he had written a letter explaining his lack of contact because he was on a "mission" for the Order. Sirius told himself it was because he hadn't wanted to get Harry's hopes up, if the pardon didn't go through.

It wasn't until a week after the notice came out in the Prophet, that he woke with a fiendish headache in a dingy room in the back of the Hogshead. He was naked as the day he was born, with two women and one man in bed with him. Empty bottles of firewhisky littered the floor and the room stank of booze, sex and unwashed bodies. Not

until that time did his feverish mind vaguely turn to thoughts of his godson. Oww! He was in serious need of a hangover potion. What was he thinking again?

Oh yes. He was the Godfather, James and Lily said so. He needed to get to the goblins and get the Potter will. He needed to claim Harry's guardianship before . . . before. . . . Why did he have to rush again? Oh right. Dumbly Dory. The old coot had the will sealed and had claimed Harry's guardianship for himself. Well, he just have to unseal the will and kick Dumbledore in his wrinkly ol' arse. Ew! The thought! Bad picture!

Right first, he needed another drink. Where were his pants?

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Sequestering himself after curfew in the Room of Requirements, Harry now knew what to write about in his next article. Honestly, the Wizarding World made it so easy for him to find things to write about.

Part of the Problem

Well! I didn't think anyone would be truly interested in my little letters of inquiry, and now I am writing a column! I have come up in the world, I must say.

I have recently learned that there is a betting pool going on between both staff and students at Hogwarts on who I am. I find this very entertaining. According to what I overheard recently, I could very well be in any house as I somehow encompass all of the virtues of all of the houses! How amusing. Does such a paragon really exist?

Should I provide clues on who I am? Sorry. Why should I make it easy on you, my readers? Isn't the mystery a large part of your interest?

Several letters have been passed to me, by both the editor of the Daily Prophet and the Quibbler, that have piqued my interest about various and sundry aspects of wizarding society. They along with the tidal wave of howlers that recently hit Hogwarts brings me to my current observations.

First let me assure you that no howlers, hexed, or charmed letters reach me. They are all screened before they come to my hand. It's in my contracts.

Second, for the record, the goblins hold my contracts and will refuse anyone access to the documents. This, too, is one of the stipulations of my contracts. So that, as a means of trying to find out who I really am is next to impossible. Unless of course you wish to go to war with the Goblin Nation. For those that tried to send an owl directly to me at Hogwarts, you failed! Those poor owls will never forgive you for the loss of their tail feathers.

Lastly I want to address the howlers that are being sent, not just to me, but to students in general

Howlers are disgusting in my opinion. They serve no useful purpose. Howlers may make you feel better but they do not help the situation they are sent to supposedly address.

I remember listening to Molly Weasley airing the Weasley family's soiled linens for thirty minutes in the Great Hall. All it proved was she had a very grating, strident voice and seemed to take great delight in shaming her children and ruining breakfast for the rest of us.

It was very disgusting to listen to and it made the Weasleys a laughing stock. Did it help the situation that she was complaining about? No. The Weasley twins, whom the howler was directed to, left the Great Hall in the middle of her tirade. In fact, her howler cleared the Great Hall faster than the smell of burnt cabbage. So what good did it accomplish? Nothing beyond irritating both students and staff and making her look like a harriidan.

Which makes me wonder why the Hogwarts staff isn't doing something about howlers. They do after all control the wards around the school. Adding a howler free ward wouldn't be much of a problem. I guess they enjoy watching parents verbally abusing their students in front the whole school.

A few days ago, I was witness to a virtual avalanche of howlers aimed at the staff of Hogwarts in the Great Hall. Sadly, all they accomplished was a free day for students and caused more work for the house elves to clean the Great Hall while the staff hid in their

offices. So while it made you, who sent the howlers, feel good, it did nothing for the problems you were attempting to address.

If you really want to make a difference, howlers aren't the answer. The answer is get up off your lazy bum and do something positive. In the muggle world, a student in trouble fears their parents being called in to their school for a "conference." It would seem that the wizarding world doesn't value their children highly enough to put forth actual effort to solve problems first hand.

By the same token, if you have a complaint about Ministry policies, well, it's your own fault. You voted them in, vote them out. If you don't like what the newspapers are saying, then don't buy the paper. Have a problem with a dark lord running amok and killing innocent people? Then stop waiting for someone else to end the problem!

Good grief people! You greatly outnumber the monster and his followers! He would be in a world of trouble if you all stood together against them. Even the muggles borns families could make a difference. Amazing what a double barreled skeet gun can do, even to a wizard. Fight back! Your safety and that of your families is not just the concern of the government. Take responsibility for your own well being.

The muggles have a saying: "If you aren't part of the solution, then you are part of the problem."

So what are you? Part of the problem? Or part of the solution?

-Oliver Twist

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Thank you all for the wonderful reviews. The few critical reviews are just as useful as the "Good Chapter. Update soon." At least we know they are enjoying the story.

Sorry to say, I have to take off for my mom's again. So it'll be awhile for the next update. She is still hurting but doing better.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau.

Chapter 14: The Learning Curve

Molly was beyond furious as she wadded the Quibbler into a tight ball and slammed it into the dust bin. How dare they print such lies! She would never abuse her children! Just wait! She'd send that arse of an editor a howler he'd never forget. He'd never know what hit him! Ignoring the food waiting to be cooked she hurried to collect writing supplies.

"Molly?" Arthur's voice called as he made his way downstairs and into the kitchen. "Is breakfast ready? Did my copy of the Quibbler come yet?"

"No, breakfast is late and that-that rag is in the bin where it belongs!" She loudly sputtered. "How dare they slander our good name? Just wait until I send that . . . that. . . Xeno a howler. See if I don't!"

Arthur fished out the crumpled periodical and carefully smoothed it before reading. He was just lifting his cup of tea to his lips when he saw Twist's column on the front page. A quick scan told him why his wife was so upset. His cup dropped abruptly back to its saucer. "MOLLY! STOP!" He commanded loudly.

"Really Arthur there is no need to shout," Molly chided as she laid out her quill and ink on the table.

"Molly. Don't send the howler! Don't you see it'll prove to everyone this Twist is right," Arthur said, setting the paper aside before pulling his wife onto his lap.

"Please Molly calm down. I'll go see Xeno after breakfast and see what he has to say," he sighed, tightening his arms around his dismayed wife. "Maybe I'll be able to forward a note to Mr. Twist requesting he not use our family to make his point in the future."

"But Arthur. . ."

"No dear! No howlers. I forbid it," he commanded sternly, tapping a finger on her nose. "It would only serve to prove him right."

"Am I an ab-b-busive mother Arthur?" Molly sobbed softly into his shoulder.

"No, Molly-wobbles. You just let your temper get away from you sometimes." His arms tightened in a warm hug as he comforted his wife.

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Harry was sitting at the breakfast table when the owls delivered the morning mail. Hermione gave the owl next to her plate his payment and took her copy of the the Quibbler. Setting aside a piece of toast, she hurried to unfurl the paper. Harry found it amusing that she'd taken a subscription to a paper she once called, 'Next to useless.' When he'd called her on it she simply replied that Twist's column came out a day before the Prophet's and she only got the Quibbler for that reason.

Many other Gryffindors, along with most of the school, took both the Quibbler and the Prophet as well ever since Oliver Twist started writing

"Well, this is interesting," said Hermione as her eyebrows rose to her hairline.

"What?" Ron asked, as he started to scoop a pile of scrambled eggs into his mouth.

Hermione eagerly began reading Twist's column aloud for her friends. When she got to the part about Molly Weasley's howler, " . . . I remember listening to Molly Weasley airing the Weasley family's soiled linens for thirty minutes in the Great Hall. All it proved was she had a very grating, strident voice and seemed to take great delight in shaming her children and ruining breakfast for the rest of us. . . ."

Ron's face turned fiery red as spewed his half chewed mouthful across the table and onto Harry, who had the misfortune to be sitting opposite the furious red head.

"Hey!" Harry exclaimed, jumping back, as Ron, with a shaking hand, jerked the paper out of Hermione's grasp.

"I'm going to bloody well kill him!" Ron shouted, rising to his feet as he read the article. "That bastard better damn-well hide for the rest of his life!"

Harry struggled to contain his laughter. 'Darn good thing I'm writing anonymously,' he thought.

"5 points from Gryffindor, Mr. Weasley for such an unruly display at table," said Prof. McGonagall. "And another 5 for language," she sniffed.

"But. . . but. . . Professor. The paper. . . " Ron shouted, waving the crumpled periodical in her face.

The Great Hall had gone quiet as all eyes turned to the Gryffindor table.

"You know," Harry said, spelling himself clean before returning to his seat. "Twist has a point. Why isn't there a ward against howlers? And you have to face it Ron, your mum can be very unforgiving with her howlers."

"Oi! Don't you remember she was the loudest in that bunch last week?" shouted Seamus. "I'm glad she ain't my mum. I tell you! Off her trolley, she is!"

Ron whipped around to hex the Irish lad, only to come face to face with Professor Snape. The potions master stood, arms folded across his chest. "10 points for drawing a wand on a fellow student, Mr. Weasley. Care to try for more?"

Prof. McGonagall huffed, straightening as she glared at her fellow colleague. "Really Severus, I had everything in hand." Severus Snape smirked as he returned to his place at the Head Table.

When Ronald Weasley sat back down, The Head of the Gryffindor House turned to Harry. "Mr. Potter," she said sternly. "The headmaster has better things to do than to play with the wards for the convenience of students."

Minerva sniffed loudly as she walked towards the Head Table. All eyes followed her while many eyes darted to the ceiling, expecting more owls to wing in bearing red letters only to be disappointed.

"Yea, like meddling in my life," Harry grumbled softly, rolling his eyes, earning a look from Hermione. "This Oliver Twist makes a lot of sense. You know?"

Albus sat uneasily at the head table while Filius was calmly discussing the article with Pomona Sprout. It would seem they were two of the few who had not suffered from Twist's previous column.

"Well, I would say Mr. Twist is very arrogant if he finds this all amusing, I surely don't," Prof. Sinestra said, breaking into the discussion. "The very idea of us promoting child abuse!"

"I think you missed the point, my dear," Filius responded. "It's not that we encourage abuse, but rather that we allow it to continue." That said he turned once more to his meal.

Albus winced slightly as his eyes moved to the Gryffindor table and to the messy haired young man eating quietly with his friends. Did he do the right thing by Harry? He knew that Lily's sister wasn't the best role model for the boy, but he would at least be safe from death eaters while with her. He continued his musings while conversation ebbed and flowed around him.

"True but how many students besides the Weasleys get howlers?" asked Pomona. "And I'm not talking about that barrage we got last week." She shuddered from the memory.

"Normally," Severus Snape sneered, looking over his tea cup. "We get about four or five a month, most from Molly Weasley. The rest are usually sent to other Gryffindors. Although, I do remember one being sent last month to a Ravenclaw. Something about failing DADA. . ."

"Yes. Yes," Filius said, waving it off. "I've talked to both student and parent about it and it will not be repeated. However, I happen to agree with Mr. Twist. Why are we allowing howlers to get through? I know that the wards can be adjusted and it wouldn't take that much time or magic to do so."

Everyone looked over at Albus who was busy stroking his long beard. "Albus?" Prof. McGonagal asked. "What do you think? Albus?"

"Think? About what, my dear?" He responded after she poked him with her elbow.

"The wards, Albus! Will you be setting them to eliminate howlers soon?" She replied in a huff.

"Ah yes. The wards will be tweaked soon," the headmaster said absent-mindedly. "Maybe around the holidays, when the students are gone."

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Arthur, after talking with Xeno Lovegood, made his way towards his office. He made a quick trip to the loo before he greeted his secretary.

He had been stopped by a few of his friends asking about the article and heard many more comments on his way through the ministry. Arthur sighed. The article was right, Molly's howlers didn't add to the prestige to the Weasley name, nor did they serve to rein in their errant offspring.

Arthur knew for a fact that by third year Bill and Charlie were immune to her tirades, and the twins ignored them quite effectively after their first year. Ron however, seemed to be thoroughly cowed by them. Or, perhaps, a better word would be ashamed. Arthur sighed and shook his head. How could he not be aware of the hurt? Of the shame a howler brought to a child in front of their peers?

Arthur sighed. It was going to be a long day.

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"Croaker, another report from Sparkplug."

"Oh?" the Head of the Unspeakables asked, looking up from the paperwork piled on his desk.

"He's chatted with ol Loony Lovegood," the agent said as he placed the report on the desk. "Seems the Twist article is right. Xeno has a special room all set up for howlers and cursed letters. He has the room so heavily fortified that even a heavy duty reducto blast

couldnt dent it. Been fielding howlers for years and has it all down to a fine bit of spellwork. Might be a good idea for us."

Croaker leaned back in his chair. "I've read that article and I'm amazed. Mr. Twist would make a great operative."

"Huh?" the man replied, caught by the sudden change in subject. "How so, boss? He's just a lad, right?"

"He's canny. Knows how to poke a bees nest and not get stung. Everyone is so focused on the howler portion of the article that they miss the heart of it."

"And that is?"

"If you aren't part of the solution, then you are part of the problem."

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The Leaky Cauldron was busy as usual. Tom was filling drink orders when ol' Xeno Lovegood came in to drop off the latest batch of the Quibbler. Naturally, over the course of many weeks since Xeno had hired that Twist lad, the Quibbler sales in the Leaky had tripled. Tom pulled out the cash box were he had stashed Xeno's share of the take. Here ya be, Xeno. What has Mr. Twist been up to this time?

"Thank you My Good Man," Xeno said, taking the heavy cash box. "I added a few more copies this time. Mr. Twist was in fine fettle this week."

Tom picked up the copy and whistled as he read. "Blimey! Merlin Save us! He sure isn't pullin' any punches, is he?"

Xeno laughed as he left.

"Cor, blimey, what be he goin' on about this time?" asked one of the regulars.

A dirty, withered hag picked up a copy and started to read aloud to the listening patrons. As she read, the Leaky got deadly silent.

"Always thought them Howlers was a waste a good magic. Sure makes ya feel better when ya send one, tho'. Hate to be on the receivin' end," said an elderly wizard in the far corner.

"I got me a 'owler from ol' Moll onced. Cor, glad I ain't married ta t'at'un. She 'as a voice ta put a banshee ta weepin' when she's full on," called out another patron, rising his mug in agreement.

Several patrons nodded and returned his salute.

Tom mulled over the article. Rubbing his chin thoughtfully, he gave a nod like he made up his mind.

"Whatcha thinkin, Tom'o?" the hag who read the article.

"This Twist lad knows what he's talkin' about. I hate to be him when he is known. Too many will be wantin' his hide before long. Merlin Save Us, but he is correct. Sure smarts a bit when a lad has ta point out the obvious ta us ol' folks."

"How's that?"

"If ya aren't part of the solution, ya are part of the problem."

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An insane laugh echoed off the grimy stone walls of a darkened room. Tom Riddle, aka Lord Voldemort, laughed at the humiliation of a traitorous, pure blood family. Served them right! Blood traitors, the lot of them. He cackled his way through the column until he came to the paragraph urging the wizarding world to stand united against him.. How dare this insolent brat! Severus would find out who he was and then. . . .

His shrieks and curses echoed through the dank house as he shredded the paper in his hands. Nagini and Pettigrew scurried for cover, praying his anger would cool before they were summoned.

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Almost at 1,000 reviews! Frau and I are bowled over at how well this story is being received. None of our other stories are even close to the stats this story has.

A few reviewers asked why we aren't into writing professionally, or at least working on an original novel. The answer being, we are having too darn much fun writing fan-fiction. We do have a novel written last year 2008 for NaNoWr but it needs a lot of editing and reworking. We'd rather be writing fan-fiction for fun than slaving over an original piece of work.

To those reviewers complaining about Fox news, stats and nationalism in our story, we say, hit the red button! Our only agenda is fun for us and for you, our readers. Some of you are really putting too much thought into our work of fiction.

This is fiction and an AU fiction at that. Those not comprehending those facts are on the wrong site. Sure we may have fudged with some of the facts and stats, but it's called artistic license.

Frau and I will continue to say, Reviews are Very Much Welcome!
Flames Definitely Are Not!

Until next time GF and the Frau

Chapter15: Going To the Horse's Mouth

Harry sat down with a weary sigh. Hermione sat directly across from him at the library table, while Ron and Ginny flanked him. Ginny was on his left and Ron on his right. From the determined look on Hermione's face, he got the distinct impression he was in for a rough time. 'Let the interrogation begin,' he thought.

"Harry?" asked Ginny. "Just where do you go when you disappear?"

Harry looked at her coldly, ' Ah, the opening salvo.'

"Yea mate," Ron said, looking from the charms essay he was working on. "We need to know in case something happens."

Harry closed his eyes in disgust. "It really is none of your business, but if you must know, some place where I can think." He replied in an icy voice. "I'm tired of the stares and whispers and getting bloody tired of people asking me about how I feel about Twist's articles!" Then his shoulders slumped in defeat. "Can't I have at least some privacy of my own?"

"But we're your friends, Harry. You can tell us anything," Hermione pleaded.

"Are you really?" Harry asked in disbelief. "Does that work both ways? Tell me 'Mione, when was the last time you and Ron snogged? Any plans on shagging soon?" He leered at her.

Hermione choked, turning bright scarlet at his words. Miss Pince shushed them from her desk.

Ginny batted the back of Harry's head. "Yes we are your friends. And mind your mouth Harry!"

"Ow! Bloody Hell!" Harry exclaimed, rubbing the back of his head. "What was that for?"

Ginny grinned and shrugged. "Something to remind you `that we still are here for you. You can tell us anything."

Harry huffed and returned to his homework, ignoring his friends. "Yeah, right. Anything. Just like you lot tell me anything."

"Well?" Hermione demanded, struggling for control of her blush.

Harry looked up. "When you see your way clear to answer all of my questions, I'll think about answering yours. Until then, it is simply none of your business. You are not my mother. You are not related to me in any way. I don't have to tell you anything, unless I want to, and I don't. Friends respect each other's privacy and we all know I have none, thanks to this bloody scar." His three companions sat in shocked silence.

"Hey Harry!"

"Hey mate!"

Harry's attention was immediately drawn to the pair of identical red headed twins that were bearing down on them.

"Yeah Forge and Gred?"

"Help us out here, mate"

"Yeah, who do you think is Oliver Twist?"

Harry groaned, ducking his head, but was silently thankful for the change of subject. "Well, I personally think he's two people. One doing the research and one doing the writing. There is no way one person is doing it all," he said while cackling silently. Right, now that Professor Flitwick is helping him, there really are two people working on the articles. Well, sort of. The professor had been a fountain of information and research opportunities.

"Why hasn't he come out of the closet?" Ginny asked in an attempt to ease the tension.

"Well, he would be expelled . . ." Fred said.

"Too right, there, Gred." George agreed. "Snape is already on the warpath. He wants the articles to cease now. He doesn't like his main source of entertainment under scrutiny."

"Not to mention our fearless headmaster, Forge."

Hermione huffed. "Well, whoever Oliver Twist is, he should be expelled! He's destroying the reputation of our school!"

"Aww Gred. The little know-It-All is peeved."

"Too right, mate. She doesn't like her little world shaken."

"Hey!" Ron shouted as he stood. "Leave her out of this!" Miss Pince shushed again, standing.

"If you can't be quiet then you'll have to leave," the librarian scolded.

Harry shook his head at his 'friends.' They just don't get it. How could such a smart witch have so little common sense? Didn't she see the things Twist pointed out for herself? With a heavy heart he slammed his book closed and stood.

"Harry?" Ginny called.

"Oi! Where you going?" Ron called out as he scrambled to follow Harry.

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It was after curfew when Professor Snape finally released him. Harry had just finished his latest session with Snape in what Dumbledore chose to affectionately call, 'remedial potions.' Harry's head was pounding as he struggled to make it back to the dorm before he passed out. His staggering, ashen form drew sympathetic nods from his dorm mates as Harry dropped limply onto his bed and closed the curtains. A flick of his wand and they were locked closed, another flick and a silencing spell went up.

As soon as the spells were up Dobby popped in quietly with a headache potion. Harry sighed as he quickly drank it. Then the excitable little house elf snapped his fingers and a golem was laid out next Harry. It looked just like him, pajamas and all. One illusion charm later and anyone looking in would only see a soundly sleeping Harry.

"Thanks Dobby, you are the greatest." rasped Harry. "Knock me up if anyone tries to wake me." The eccentric house elf nodded, blushing happily that his master had thanked him.

Harry activated the Goblin made port-key hanging around his neck, bracing himself for the nauseating sensation of port-key travel.

When he next opened his eyes he was flat on his arse in a special room set up for him by the Goblins at Gringotts. Normally, it would've cost him a pretty hefty sum for this service but somehow he had impressed Ragnok, so all Harry was paying for was the set up cost of the room. Quite a coup, if Harry stopped and thought about it.

Waiting for him were Lord Peter and another middle-aged man in a St. Mungo's healer's robe.

Harry had yet to learn the finer points of traveling by port-key as most times he ended up in an inglorious heap, but he was working on it. However using a port-key in the throes of a backlash headache from a failed occlumency session with Snape wasn't a very good thing.

He had been taking lessons on port-key travel, among other things, with Lord Peter and they'd found that with the amount of raw magic at Harry's finger tips, the young wizard still tended to over power the spell and crash on arrival.

"Lord Harry," Lord Peter said, reaching to help the teen back onto his feet. As Harry stood, he lost the little bit of supper left in his stomach.

"Occlumency lesson?" Lord Peter asked, as he helped his charge over to the nearby lounge chair conjured up for tonight's meeting.

"Yes sir." The shaking boy quietly acknowledged.

The healer hissed as he stepped forward. "Let me take a look. If this is what his 'lessons' do to him Severus Snape and Albus Dumbledore should be brought up on charges. They are not licensed to teach the mind arts, either of them."

"Harry, I want you to meet Healer Atwaters. He comes highly recommended and has already taken a vow of secrecy on top of his healers' oaths. He won't say anything unless you release him," Lord Peter explained as the healer moved closer.

"He has been briefed on your situation. We had plans of doing a full diagnostic on you tonight for our records," Lord Peter informed, softly as he took a nearby seat by the table. On the table were many folders, vials and writing implements.

"Do you need a pain reliever young man? What am I saying, of course you do!" Healer Atwaters said, fishing for a potion out of his bag.

"I took one before I came," Harry protested, rubbing his scar. "I'm just glad that Lord Peter was able to arrange this meeting so fast. Someone had to believe me when I said the lessons weren't working. Unfortunately Dumbledore doesn't. He just keeps saying, 'Harry my boy you need to learn this'." Harry groaned, rambling on. His head hurt and his scar felt inflamed. The cool touch of the healer's hand brought mild relief and Harry leaned into it with a sigh of gratitude.

"And all I get from Snape is, 'Concentrate! Try harder! Clear your mind! You're useless Potter, you're not even trying.' and then he points his wand at my head and screams 'Legilimens'. So far that's the extent of my lessons. Sometimes I'm so sick afterward that I can barely make it to the loo to vomit."

"Hasn't anyone given you the books or any of the basic instructions at all?" Healer Atwaters asked, appalled. As he waved his wand, he made note of the information it gave off. The more Harry told him, the more shocked he looked.

"No sir. Not at Hogwarts. I did ask Lord Peter for some help in that area," he replied with a wan smile.

"Before we proceed, Lord Potter, I would like to do a more comprehensive diagnostic scan on you."

"Aren't you doing that now?"

"All I'm doing at this time is checking your vitals and looking for a fever."

Harry looked over at Lord Peter. "He's under oath and we need it for your records," the barrister explained.

"Alright. You may, sir," Harry said with a slight nod but winced at the movement.

Healer Atwaters waved his wand in an intricate pattern over the teen's body. When he finished he sucked in a very deep breath. "I just can't believe Poppy missed all this! She's one of the very best in pediatrics. She couldn't be this blind. . ."

"Maybe she didn't?" Lord Peter commented.

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Over the next hour, Harry, Lord Peter and Healer Atwaters went over Harry's complete medical history. The diligent healer documented everything, the scars, the fact that Harry had never been vaccinated in either world, the malnutrition, the basilisk poisoning and Harry had even shown latent, lingering signs of the cruciatus curse.

"How in Merlin's, Morgana's and Sekhmet's blessed names have you survived this long Lord Potter?" Healer Atwaters gasped. "By rights, you should be dead, or a vegetable in a ward at St. Mungo's! And has anyone looked at your Curse Scar since you received it?"

"No sir, not to my knowledge." Harry looked up at the healer through his bangs. "Sir?"

"Yes Lord Potter?"

"What's going to happen now?"

"Now," Healer Atwaters said, "I'm going to give you proper Occlumency lessons. Later, I will go over what I learned tonight and form a health plan regimen. I understand you suffer from nightmares?"

"Yes sir and strange dreams as well." Harry hesitated, unsure if he should mention anything about the way his scar hurt when he was near Voldemort. "What the hell, in for a penny, in for a pound . . ."
Besides the nightmares, I can tell whenever Voldemort is around because my scar hurts, feels like my head is gonna explode. When it's really bad, it breaks open and bleeds."

Atwaters eyebrows rose to his hairline in shock. "Well then, let's get started."

Thus Harry added another clandestine lesson. Thankfully, Dobby was very good at helping him keep track of his schedule.

Lord Peter was gathering evidence against the so called 'Leader of the Light' for Harry's upcoming hearing. However, it would take more hard-core evidence than just what Lord Harry could provide. Which is why Oliver Twist's articles were so important. By weaving the gossip-mongering that the Wizarding World so enjoys with true facts and issues, Oliver was sending a very strong message for change.

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Thankfully, despite his hectic schedule, Harry was able to get an article out that week. His friends were getting very persistent at dogging him. Harry wasn't sure if they really cared or were simply following Dumbledore's orders. Either way, it was getting beyond annoying.

One thing Harry learned in all his years of using a library to hide from Dudders and his gang was that a library was the last place to share secrets in. You never knew who was listening around the corner, or in the next aisle. Whispering always attracted more attention than actually speaking in a normal tone of voice would.

He knew that the wards were a hot topic at the moment. He could hear discussions being bantered about as he studied in the library.

From the Horse's Mouth

The biggest question around Hogwarts, surprisingly, is how safe the school truly is. Not who's going to win the House Cup, or how the upcoming Quidditch season is going to go.

It seems my little rant about Howlers was more than just that. According to the professors, Hogwarts will be closed during the holidays to upgrade the wards. Of course, that means everyone will have to leave school, including Potter.

Speaking of Potter and the hols, Halloween has just passed. Halloween, the night everyone likes to celebrate so lavishly, is also

the night that made him one of the most famous figures in our world and an orphan.

I decided to find everything I could that was printed about what happened that terrible night in 1981. I found book after book on the topic, as well as newspaper articles. I was amazed that Flourish and Blotts has a complete section set aside about Potter and the events of that night.

What amazes me is very few agree on what really happened. Most tales of the events of that night are based on theories and suppositions. Not one of any of these sources put forth any actual evidence. No spells were ever recorded. There is no public medical record or cause of death on file for Lord or Lady Potter. No interviews with authorities who responded that night, nor with Potter himself now that he's at an age to speak on the matter. All of which I find to be very interesting indeed.

Many of them speculate that Potter's mother did some sort of old magic ritual before the Dark Lord killed her, before he turned his wand on the infant Potter himself. So my question is why isn't there more emphasis on the mother and not the son? I am sure that there were many mothers who have died for their children in the first war. How many managed to save their children through their death?

Why isn't Lily Potter heralded as a heroine? Naturally Potter is revered as the Boy-Who-Lived, but why isn't Lily Potter receiving more recognition for her part in this sorry tale?

Let's face it, the only person that really knows what went on is Potter, who was only a toddler of 15 months, and the Dark Lord himself. No one has ever asked Potter if he remembers that night.

Lastly, as Halloween Night has come and gone, I must wonder. Where are all these so called experts getting their facts? And the more important question is why are they making money off a child's plight? Is Potter even aware of the copy right laws, entitlement infringements laws? Of just how much these writers owe him for using his name without permission?

I am given to understand that Harry Potter dolls were a big seller a few years back. Has he ever given his permission or product endorsement for any of the related items for sale? Is he receiving

any royalties for these items? If not, why? He is most certainly is entitled.

-Oliver Twist

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A/N: Special thanks to Kylani and Alorkin and the rest of you (and you know who you are) for the in-depth reviews. Thank you. We love them.

Frau and I had no clue what happened last chapter. Ffnet just would not allow us to upload in our normal .odt format. Very strange. I ended up uploading it as .html. For some reason, it took out all the quotation marks and a few apostrophes as well. We are still trying to fix that chapter. Thank you to everyone for putting up with the mess.

We really enjoy reading all the comments, keep up the good work.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 16: Repercussions

It was well after midnight when an exhausted Harry Potter port-keyed back into his curtained bed. A whispered

"Dobby", brought his friend with a soft 'pop'.

Within seconds, the golem was gone and with a snap of his fingers Dobby had Harry pajama clad and ready for bed. " Thanks Dobby. Did anyone check on me tonight?"

"No master Harry, sir."

"Brill. Night Dobby," he muttered as he slid beneath the covers, asleep before his head hit the pillow.

"You's sleep, Harry Potter sir, Dobby be sleepin' right here too." The small creature whispered as he curled up at the foot of the bed, pulling a small throw over himself. " I's keepin' nightmares away."

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Two days after Harry's full diagnostic healer Edward Atwaters was looking over his notes and the files he was able to collect on his newest patient. Thankfully, with the help of Mr. Potter's barrister Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams and Madam Bones, he was able to get a copy of Harry's school health records from Madam Pomphrey, without Albus Dumbledore's knowledge.

The file was more extensive than the typical student record, yet several reports seemed to be missing. He had questioned the school mediwitch quite extensively on the omissions.

When he inquired, the school nurse sighed that her hands had been tied. Albus Dumbldore said the boy's relatives refused to give consent for a full medical scan, or for her to go beyond normal clinical procedures. She had tried citing possible abuse as a means of performing a deep scan but Albus would not hear of it. He'd claimed that the boy's relatives were strict, and not abusive.

She quietly informed the healer that she had her suspicions and made notes in a separate folder which she had passed over to him. "Anything for that poor boy," she said.

She informed the healer that Albus claimed that any contact with the Wizarding World might cause his relatives to refuse him a place in their home, such had been the conditions set when they took him in.

Albus had then told her that it was in Harry's best interest to stay with his relatives, as only there could he be assured protection from any Death Eaters who might try to hunt him down. Only with his Aunt was he protected by formidable blood wards and hence, safe.

Atwaters knew any healer worth their oath would've sensed an oblivation spell used on them. So the headmaster hadn't resorted to that. The good madam would've undoubtedly quit then and there, and she would have definitely reported it to the Ministry.

With a weary sigh he continued reading. Harry's file read like some sort of macabre story to frighten children with and Healer Atwaters shuddered as he leafed through it.

"Edward?" Lord Peter asked as he knocked on the healer's office door.

"Peter! Come in, come in," Edward smiled, waving his cousin in. When Lord Peter Flinchly-Addams had come to him with a concern about a client of his, Edward had been disinclined to take on a new patient. His patient load was already horrendous with all the Death Eater activities that were starting up. That was until his cousin let drop Harry Potter's name.

The healers had all been itching to get a close-up look at Potter's famous scar. Papers had been written on it, but with no real examination of said scar and with no real data, they couldn't prove the validity of any of the theories floating around.

"So how is it going with the files?" Peter asked, taking a seat.

Edward stood and poured out two glasses of port. "It's rough reading. You were right, the case has all the earmarks of child endangerment, child abuse, child neglect and verbal abuse. Thankfully," Edward turned to hand off one of the glasses. "There is no evidence of sexual abuse. Unless you want to call mind rape a sexual charge."

Lord Peter closed his eyes. "Then Severus Snape isn't teaching Harry anything?"

"No. The boy's natural defenses are too weak to keep the man out and they are being eroded as we speak. If this keeps up, Harry won't be able to keep a flea out of his mind. I just don't know what Dumbledore is thinking allowing that . . . that monster anywhere near the boy."

"Have you been reading that new columnist that the Prophet is running? Oliver Twist?" Lord Peter asked, changing the subject.

"Why yes, I have," Edward replied, with a questioning look towards his cousin. "And you are changing the subject."

"Actually, I'm not," Peter said, looking into his glass. "Since you are under secrecy oaths and are repairing the damage in Harry's mind, have you had a chance to see any of his memories?"

"You know as well as I do, I can't discuss anything I see. Even if the patient is one of your clients," Edward said.

"What if I told you Oliver is Harry? He has given permission for me to share some of his secrets. You will need to be fully briefed," Peter said, pulling out a legal parchment, handing it to Edward.

Edward straightened in his chair, taking the parchment. "That would explain it, then. Look Peter, I can't tell you what I see in Harry's memories, but I can tell you that I've noticed a few glaring gaps. I know the boy has been abused but I can't find the memories. What if. . ." Edward closed his mouth. "Out! Out! I have research to do."

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The Gryffindor Common Room was in an uproar. Harry sat in a corner trying to study, refusing to join in the chaos. The other two thirds of the Golden Trio were in a shouting match. Ginny Weasley was trying to calm them both down.

"Harry do something!" Ginny begged.

Harry held up both hands. "Sorry. I learned a long time ago to never get between them. When they get like that, they are vicious," he replied over their angry voices.

Hermione stopped. She turned to Harry. "What did you say?" she asked in a cold voice.

Harry stood up. "I said, I learned about the third time I was kicked out of the library because of you two arguing, that it's foolish to get in between you. The few times I have tried, you both turn on me for not taking your side. Sorry. I'm not crazy, taking sides between you two is a losing battle and one I will no longer fight." He turned and walked out through the portrait.

Neville shook his head as he followed Harry out of the Common room.

Ginny glared at both her brother and Hermione, throwing up her hands in disgust. "He is so freakin' right. Grow up, both of you!" She snarled before stomping off as well.

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Harry made it half way down the first flight of stairs when Neville shouted to him.

"Harry! Wait up."

"Sure Neville?"

"Why aren't you more upset with all this? I mean it's your life that's being . . ." Neville asked when he joined up with Harry.

Harry shrugged. "Story of my life, actually. I mean I have been the butt of so many articles on me, that it just doesn't faze me any more, you know? I mean, one minute I'm the media darling, then next I'm an attention-seeking prat, then I'm the next Dark Lord and then the Chosen One. I'm just numb, Neville. I'm just waiting for the next shoe to drop."

"I can see that, Harry," Neville muttered, as they walked to the library.

"Ron and Hermione just don't get it. On one hand, they keep after me to tell them everything, like they have the right to know. Then they turn around and ignore me, when I need them most. They haven't seen what I've seen," Harry sighed, rubbing the back of his neck. "I just can't trust them any more. It's like I'm growing up, but they aren't, you know?"

"Oh Harry," Neville reassured, stopping in front of the library. "They'll figure it out soon enough. Look, if you want to contact a barrister, I can ask Gran for a reference."

"Thanks Neville, but I've already got one. He was recommended that day they questioned us about Umbridge. He's been brilliant," Harry said, turning to go into the library. "You won't say anything, will you?"

"No, Harry. You have my word."

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Albus sat in the weekly staff meeting pondering, not the report that Moaning Myrtle had once again over flooded her loo, or the report on one of the hippogriffs that had gotten loose in one of the greenhouses.

No, he had bigger problems. One was pondering on how to respond to the latest Twist article and how to keep Harry away from any barrister that might take up his cause. The other was finding the records to justify his use of the heir account funds. The Goblins were demanding he account for those monies for their books and he only had two more weeks to do so.

"Albus! Are you listening to what I am saying?" demanded Minerva. "We have to do something about this Mr. Twist. We just can't have him making a mockery of our school."

"I quite agree," Severus stated, looking a bit haggard. Albus knew that the poor man hadn't taken the article about the Potter's murders well. Lily's death still haunted him. It brought up too many painful memories for the temperamental professor.

"So Mr. Twist was right? No one has ever asked Mr. Potter about that night?" Filius asked.

Pomona Sprout asked. "How did Mr. Twist know that Mr. Potter has never been interviewed?"

Albus shook his head, bringing his thoughts back to the meeting. He would worry about the Goblins later. "No, I deliberately kept the press from contacting Mr. Potter. As you can see, these authors only used speculation and second hand hearsay. Mr. Potter, to my knowledge, has not been interviewed about that dreadful night."

"Is there any chance that Mr. Potter is this Mr. Twist?" Pomona asked.

Severus snorted. "I thought we covered this. Potter hates the press. After last year, he just doesn't trust them."

Albus' eyes twinkled as he stroked his beard. "It has been my experience that the press will write whatever they deem most interesting despite what they may learn in an interview."

"Do you think he will contact a barrister, like Mr. Twist advised?" asked Filius, changing the subject.

"His mail is being monitored as we speak," Albus reassured them. "So far, he hasn't tried to send any mail out."

"But that's illegal!" Minerva screeched.

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"Professor?"

"Yes Harry?"

"I got a letter the other day from the Unspeakables," the teen said, fishing out a folded letter and handing it over. "They have been following my articles with interest and wish for me to continue. They've also offered help and suggestions."

"Do they know who you are? Are they connecting Harry Potter to Oliver Twist? It isn't wise to accept mail from them without checking for tracing spells," Prof. Flitwick asked. Taking the letter, he did a quick read as he scanned it magically.

Harry shook his head. "Mr. Lovegood wouldn't have sent it on if they had. Plus, Dobby would not have given it to me."

"Ah yes. That is one very loyal and crazy house elf."

Harry laughed. "Dobby is the best."

"So are you going to take them up on their offer?"

Harry shrugged. "Maybe. I have to be careful though. I really don't want to give out clues leading back to me."

"I am sure, Mr. Potter, that you'll manage. As you had this in your pocket, weren't you a bit concerned about someone finding it?" the professor asked, holding up the folded letter.

Harry shook his head. "If you look closely, you will see a touch of house elf magic. Unless I personally hand this note to someone, like I just did, they couldn't read it. Dobby and I worked this out months ago."

"Clever, Mr. Potter, very clever," Filius Flitwick smiled, handing it back. "So now what?"

Harry grinned.

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Several people have said it reminded them of an earlier story Celestial Requiem by Raven Dragonclaw. It was published in 2004 and never finished. I've read the story and was very disappointed that it wasn't complete. However, I liked the concept and ran with it. Frau agreed and just had to add her take on it.

Well, Frau and I hope we've answered several questions and speculations on what's coming.

Knock me up: British slang for "Wake me up" or used when asking for a wake up call. Honestly people, we did mention this context in the disclaimer.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau.

Chapter 17: Are These Tests Really Necessary?

It was now the middle of November and the Christmas hols were fast approaching. With Umbridge out of the way and the auror that Madam Bones provided in her place, the DADA lessons were quite exciting. Harry and his friends were learning a lot.

Harry was adjusting to the schedule he and Lord Peter had worked out. He didn't have free time anymore. Between the Remedial Potions twice a week, studying with Hermione and Ron whenever she could nag him into it, plus Quidditch practice, Harry wasn't sure how he managed the meetings with the goblins and Lord Peter once a week and Healer Atwaters twice a week. Thank Merlin for Dobby!

Harry's estate management meetings with the goblins were thankfully only two hours long. They were currently going over his portfolios in both the muggle and wizarding worlds, keeping up with market trends. Lord Peter sat in on these meetings to briefly detail his progress of Lord Harry's emancipation suit against the Ministry. Lord Peter also reported the audit for Grunnings was almost finished. They were still compiling the data.

At least so far they'd managed to keep Dumbledore, the old meddler, out of the loop. With the Christmas holidays fast approaching, it wouldn't be that way for long. As soon as Lord Peter filed, everything would go arse over teacup.

The meetings with Healer Atwater varied in duration. He was busy healing the damage done to Harry's body over the years. Plus, he had to undo the damage that the remedial potions were causing without leaving signs that Harry was being helped.

The exercises and books that Healer Atwaters gave him helped Harry to understand just what Snape was doing and the damage he was causing.

"Sir?" Harry asked one night.

"Yes Harry?"

"Why is it that Snape hasn't found any memories about me being Oliver Twist? It is one of the reasons I dread seeing him. I keep thinking he'll find out."

Healer Atwaters had no love for the potions master. He had no problem with Harry's lack of respect for Severus Snape. Therefore, he made no attempt to correct the disrespect or to force Harry to add the title of 'Professor' in front of the man's name. It was patently obvious to him that the man couldn't teach and therefore held no claim to the title.

"Well Harry," the Healer said, waving him over to a chair. "I have a theory about that. Have a seat while I explain."

Once they were comfortable, the healer started, "I was concerned about it at first when your barrister, Lord Peter, came to me. However, I have noticed an odd quirk in your mind that I couldn't explain away until he mentioned your secret."

Harry frowned but said nothing.

"The fact is, Harry, that you have developed the ability to lock away certain parts of your thoughts and memories that you don't want to share or that bring you pain. I believe this is an innate part of your mind and it was created when you were a child. It is where you 'push' everything you don't want to deal with. A form of natural occlumency often seen in abused children."

Harry frowned as he thought about what Healer Atwaters said. "Do you mean when Snape does what he does, he's actually tearing down my defenses? Is that why it hurts so much?"

"Exactly." Here the healer was a bit uncomfortable. "I am spending most of our sessions repairing the damage and helping you shore up your defenses."

Harry straightened a bit. "So basically he's tearing down and your rebuilding. What happens if he manages to break it down completely?"

"What would happen, Harry, is that you would develop two very distinct personalities. Right now, they are still connected, should that connection be severed you will have two separate personalities. One, shall we say the child, who first felt the need to hide is your Slytherin side. The other, for want of a better term, would be the side

everyone expects to see in you. You are the Boy-Who-Lived, Dumbledore's Golden boy."

Harry listened thoughtfully as the Healer continued.

"With the need to protect yourself as a child, you developed your Slytherin side very early in your life. You had to hide all of your natural abilities so that you would not be punished. This included your intelligence and your magic. When you finally re-emerged back into the Wizarding World, everyone expected a confident, heroic young wizard and your mind adjusted to fit that role."

"Well the sorting hat did say that I would do well in either Gryffindor or Slytherin and I chose Gryffindor," Harry mused, with a slight frown.

"Remarkable. I didn't think anyone could influence that ancient scrap of fabric," Healer Atwaters remarked. "But getting back to what I was saying. Keeping your intelligence hidden left you no outlet for the frustrations caused in your dealings with the Wizarding World. Therefore your Slytherin side created Oliver Twist and hid him safely away. We must be careful not to allow these two sides of your personality to split completely."

"So how is it that Snape hasn't caught on?" Harry asked, directing the subject back to the problem at hand.

"When you are standing in front of him, what side are you showing him? Your Slytherin side or your Gryffindor side?"

Harry shrugged. "My Gryffindor side, I guess. It's what he expects of me."

"Ah ha! Exactly!" Healer Atwaters exclaimed. "So while you are standing in front of him, your Slytherin side, the one that has always protected you, grabs all those memories you don't want him to see and hides them. It is also sometimes called, survival instinct. Severus Snape isn't to be trusted, so it hides those memories you don't want him to see."

"But he still sees plenty of my past," Harry protested.

"Yes he does but then he only sees fragments of your memories and not whole sets," he explained. "Again, it goes back to survival. He would get very suspicious if he found nothing, now wouldn't he?"

Harry nodded and thought over all of his sessions, and the bits of memory that Snape saw. "But how?"

"Again, your Slytherin side decides what the man sees or doesn't see. You are a natural Occlumens and what that man is doing is tearing down your shields. Your natural instinct for self preservation shunts him over to memories on your Gryffindor side. I believe he is doing it either on Dumbledore's order, or Riddle's."

One thing Harry liked about this healer was he wasn't a sheep like the rest of the Wizarding World. He refused to say "He Who Must Not Be Named," or "You Know Who." Although, he did say names have power. So he refused to say Lord Voldemort, or the Dark Lord, for him it's Tom or Riddle.

Harry scowled. "Could Snape be doing this because he hates my father? He's always comparing me to him," Harry asked.

"Don't worry, Harry. Your mind shields are working very well," he reassured. "Which brings me to another point. Your curse scar. I would like to try something, if it's alright with you?"

Harry raised an eyebrow. "I'm listening."

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Hermione sighed. She couldn't find Harry again and he was late for their study session.

Harry!" she exclaimed, when she finally caught up with him in the library. "We need to study for our OWLS. Where have you been?"

The teen sighed as he looked up from the homework essay he was working on. "I've been here since dinner, Hermione. Where did you think I would be?"

She huffed angrily as she sat in a chair across from him. "These exams are important, Harry!"

Harry closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. "I know Hermione. I know. Look, let me finish this Potions Essay then I'll go back to the Common room with you."

"Alright Harry," she replied with a long suffering sigh.

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All eyes looked at Hermione Granger as she screamed out a denial a couple mornings later. It was the day that Twist's article came out. Many pure bloods, including Draco Malfoy, snickered while reading the article. Many of the half-blood and muggle-borns shook their heads in disbelief.

"Hey Granger!" Draco Malfoy sniped from the Slytherin table. "Better study hard, if your grades are good enough I might just hire you as my secretary!"

The Slytherins burst into laughter as Hermione Granger stormed out.

Neville Longbottom started to read aloud what had gotten Hermione so upset:

Are These Tests Really Necessary?

With the Christmas Hols coming up, everyone's thoughts are turned to going home, holiday shopping, seeing family, and enjoying the holiday season. Except for a select few, that is.

It is noted by many that Ravenclaws are research obsessive, along with one Gryffindor. OWL and NEWTS exams are less than six months away. Time to get out the day planners and work up a study guide. But for most students, there is plenty of time to study, why worry when Christmas is almost upon us? Right?

After watching Hermoine Granger man-handle the Boy Who Lived into studying for their OWLs several times this week, it begs the question, why are these exams so important?

Well, the answer should be to get better jobs, a career you want, or to get accepted as an apprentice. However are they?

Let's look at the statistics:

Outstanding Wizarding Levels, or more affectionately called OWLS, are the first of two major sets of wizarding exams. Passing them allows a student to take the next step and go forward to their NEWTS (Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests) classes.

In the case of Potions, Professor Snape will only accept those students that have passed their OWL potions exam with Outstanding (O). That's great, as certain careers require high NEWT level potions scores, but if you don't get an O or an Exceeds Expectation (EE) in the class then your career choices are limited.

Did you know less than four percent of all fifth years get the required O in potions, and most of them are Ravenclaws and Slytherins? An occasional Hufflepuff or Gryffindor may get into the class, if they are brilliant enough. However, the Gryffindor student usually drops out within the first six weeks due to stress even if they qualify. It is well known that Professor Snape seems to make it his life's mission to drum out any Gryffindors that have the gall to make it into his NEWT level potion class.

So what does this say for those wanting careers in their chosen fields that require Potions NEWTS, especially healers, aurors, and potions mastery?

Now let's say you have passed everything and have graduated Hogwarts with O's and EE's. Now what? The career you want is just waiting for you, right? It depends. Are you a pure blood? If not, then your career choice has just narrowed appreciably.

If you are a pure blood and have the right scores on your NEWTs, you can do just about anything you want. While you may start in a lower level job at the Ministry, you are guaranteed to advance regularly and there is no limit for advancement.

If you are a half-blood, you may start in a low level office position or as a clerk. After that, it depends on if your pure blood ministry-employed relative is willing to call in a favor for you to advance to the next level. Even then, you have to be in high standing with your pure-blood connection. Your chances of getting beyond senior secretary are extremely small.

If you have high enough NEWT grades and have pure-blood connections, you can probably take on an apprenticeship in your chosen fields such as healer and hope for advancement to senior healer.

If you are a muggle-born. Not going to happen. The only ministerial positions open for you are secretarial, custodial, or food service. There is no advancement, only long hours and little to no benefits. The only fields where muggle borns stand a chance are healing and auror corps. Apprenticeship is almost non-existent.

Don't believe me? Check with the Ministry Personnel Office and their job listings. They also have a standard questionnaire for various job openings. In small print at the bottom of most of the forms, it reads, "Muggle borns and those with creature inheritance need not apply."

My questions to you are:

How many Department Heads are muggle-born?

How many Department sub-heads are muggle-born?

How many senior secretaries are pure bloods?

What is the ratio of pure blood to muggle born clerks?

How many Ministers were pure bloods? Half bloods? Or Muggle-borns?

According to my research, I found, no department heads and sub heads to be muggle-born or half bloods.

Almost all senior secretaries are pure bloods with one or two exceptions.

I had a hard time working out the ratio. I do know that most clerking positions are a jumping off point for better positions for pure bloods. They are however, as far as most muggle-borns can advance. The turn over rate in clerk positions within the ministry is 93 percent. Why is that?

There has never been any Minister of Magic who wasn't a pure blood.

It is a documented fact that 95 percent of all muggle borns who have graduated from Hogwarts either leave Britain or return back to the muggle world for further schooling and better jobs. These students are some of the brightest and best of our graduates.

Depending on their pure blood connections, most half-bloods also leave to seek employment outside Britain.

So, coming back to our OWLS and NEWTS. Why take them if they are so worthless for the majority of our students? It would seem their only purpose is to justify Hogwarts existence as a school for the minority of pure-bloods.

-Oliver Twist

Editor Note. Several copies of the current employment questionnaires are printed in their entirety on page 5. -XL

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Keep the reviews coming. We would like to thank everyone who does.

So we were wrong about 'knock me up'. Seems it fell out of use. Told ya we were old.

Until next time. -GF and The Frau

Chapter 18: The Clock Is Ticking

Just where was this Oliver Twist getting his facts? That was on the mind of Cornelius Fudge, Minister of Magic. His plans for Hogwarts were in jeopardy. The whole fiasco with Umbridge was now proving to be his undoing. He should've sent someone with more Defense knowledge than Delores but no one was more loyal to his cause than her.

With Delores now in Azkaban for torturing students with a dark artifact, Cornelius just wanted to destroy someone, anyone. He fantasized about Potter's head, along with Twist's, on a plate, prominently displayed in the Atrium of the Ministry. How dare they question his authority!

"Sir?" A red-headed aide stepped into the office nervously.

"Yes, Weatherby?"

"The Department Heads Meeting is ready, just as you ordered, Sir," Percy Weasley said with a slight frown. He hated being called Weatherby but he was tired of correcting the Minister. There were times when he wondered if Fudge deliberately used the wrong name out of spite.

The meeting dragged on as Cornelius had expected. He demanded to know the makeup of each department's staffing, asking in particular for a break down of each position by blood status. He sent Weatherby out in the middle of the meeting for more tea, a calming draught as well as a headache potion.

Every department, it seemed, was headed by a pure blood with one exception. Dirk Cresswell, Head of the Goblin Liaison Office, who had claimed to be a pure blood had just been found to be muggle-born. Needless to say, he was sacked and imprisoned for falsifying his family tree. However, not many wanted the position anyways, dealing with the goblins was considered beneath most pure bloods.

Each department had muggle-borns holding some positions, but nothing above the minor clerk and secretarial level. A press release was hammered out stating that all Ministry employees were hired according to education level and competence. Satisfied with their efforts, everyone went their way.

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Arthur shook his head as he entered the loo. He understood what Oliver Twist was trying to do with his articles and he was very impressed with the way Twist was trying to promote change within their world. However, everyone knew it would take more than just mere words in a newspaper to bring about true change.

He looked down at the sealed file that hadn't been in his hand when he entered. "Looks like another special delivery to the Goblins for Twist," he sighed. He quickly and silently cast a wandless disillusionment spell on the file before he left the stall.

Arthur had been shocked the first time he'd been ordered to handle such a delivery. It wasn't difficult, nor even dangerous, simply a ministry employee stopping off on his way home for a withdrawal. After his withdrawal a brief stop at the local market and then home. The disillusioned file was casually left behind for the Goblin teller and Arthur was home free. He did, however, wonder what Croaker was sending Twist. No, not something he was going to dwell on . . . sometimes it was better to remain ignorant.

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Rita Skeeter was also wondering where this Twist brat was getting his information. She would love to strangle the boy, but not before she'd wrung all the juicy information about his sources from his mind! Her thoughts turned to another annoying brat. She still owed Potter and that mud blood bitch that held her captive for so long. She shuddered at the memory of being trapped in that glass jar.

With great care, Rita slipped into her boss' office. She knew she would be fired if she was found going through his desk. She just had to get his notes and files on Twist now that the brat was writing for both papers. Ol' Fudge would pay her double her salary if she could get any dirt on the rabble-rouser.

Rita also had a score to settled with Anderson. She couldn't believe the yank bint got her old job so easily. Rita was sure the yank was sleeping with Charles, if only she could prove it, then she would be top reporter again.

Not to mention, ol' Cornelius was counting on her to get the dirt. He was in a precarious position right now. It looked like Umbridge was going to take him down with her, heads were going to roll! She carefully opened Lord Charles' desk, wary of any wards he might have used.

Nothing! There was nothing here! Rita searched everywhere, even Anderson's desk. There was nothing to go on. Not even a scrap in the bins that mentioned Twist. What in Merlin's name was she going to do now?

She'd have to see if either of them took the files home. She wasn't going to give up, she couldn't! This would be the story of a lifetime. She would write an exposé that would reveal Twist to the world! She, Rita Skeeter, was going to have her former position of top reporter back and nothing, not even the truth, was going to stand in her way.

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Albus Dumbledore staggered from Gringotts bank in shock.

The past three hours had shaken him to the core. Ragnok and seven other high ranking Goblins had grilled him mercilessly about his withdrawals from the Founders Vault.

Fortunately he had been able to provide enough evidence to prove that he had used most of the monies he withdrew for school expenses and for funding the Tri-wizard Tourney. Hogwarts had hosted two other schools, thereby incurring higher than normal costs.

The remaining monies, some 30,000 Galleons, he could not account for as he had used them to fund the Order. He was therefore required to repay that amount to the Founders fund from his own vault. Albus shuddered. Goblins, hardly the friendliest of beings at the best of times, were absolutely terrifying when angered. He stopped for a bracing whiskey at the Leaky Cauldron, or possibly two. When he felt settled enough he apparated back to his office. A poorer but wiser man.

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Filius Flitwick found his seat at the weekly staff meeting. He looked at his fellow professors. Just about everyone was counting down the month to the Christmas hols. He had been fielding questions and angry comments from his students for the past few days.

Albus sighed as he stood to start the meeting. "With all the uproar that the Quibbler and Twist have started, I've come across some disturbing news. Hogwarts' charter is at risk."

"And just why is the charter at risk?" Minerva demanded.

"Hogwarts will close if we can not maintain the mandates of the Founders. If we lose the muggle-borns and the half-bloods, we will be in violation of one if not, two of the mandates of our charter. If that happens then Hogwarts will revert back to the heirs," Albus said, closing his eyes for a moment. "And we are already in violation of the third mandate due to ministry interference. "

"But the Board of Governors? Cornelius Fudge wouldn't stand for Hogwarts closing," Minerva insisted.

Albus sighed. "Nothing the Board or the Ministry can say or do can prevent it. And as it stands, the Ministry is part of the problem."

"Are there living heirs?" Minerva asked, concerned.

"There are two. Harry Potter and Tom Riddle."

"Impossible!" several of the staff exclaimed.

"Afraid so," Albus said, in a tired voice.

"Does the Potter brat know?" Severus asked, leaning back in his chair.

"Fortunately for us, no he doesn't. He hasn't been to Gringotts lately," Albus confirmed. "Which is a good thing."

"Why is that Albus?" Filius asked. "Don't you think that the boy deserves to know his heritage?"

The Charms Professor sat quietly fuming inside. He didn't like what he was hearing. Albus was putting the whole school at risk with his

games. He had remained in the background quietly for years and watched the aged wizard play his many mind games, some were for the betterment of the wizarding world and some not. Filius was furious about the games the headmaster was playing with the life of the Potter boy.

Remembering back when Lilly's son first entered Hogwarts, the charms master had been appalled at his first view of the child. Harry was the shortest in his year and looked like an unmade bed. His clothes were several sizes too big and terribly worn. The boy was almost skeletal, but most just saw the baggy clothes, not the body beneath them. He had never agreed with the way Albus had handled the boy's placement or, education.

Albus' philosophy of throwing the boy into the deep end and watching to see whether he sinks or swims was wrong. Anyone with half a mind could see that the boy was drowning in a world he knew nothing about. How long before he buckled under the weight being placed on his thin and undersized shoulders?

Albus sighed, turning to the rest of the staff. "Anyone have any idea who this Oliver Twist is? Are we no closer to finding anything out?"

"Have you any thoughts on who Mr. Twist is? Severus? Someone with your observation skills surely must have noticed something by now?" Pomona Sprout stated.

Severus hmphed and sneered. "I have narrowed it down to three possibilities. The person is either a Ravenclaw or a Slytherin."

"Oh? Why is that? I would have thought Miss Granger would be a candidate? The twins have her down as the odds on favorite," Filius asked, intrigued.

Severus sneered. "Well, since Twist has been delighting in tweaking Miss Granger's nose lately, I would have to say she is the wrong gender to begin with. No, for all of the bravado and daring that Twist is showing in publishing his articles, he will not found be in the Lion's House." Severus replied with an arrogant sneer.

Minerva huffed and started to speak but Filius wasn't finished. "Indeed Severus. I found several in Minerva's House quite capable of such enterprise."

"Name one," Severus sneered as Minerva lunged up with her wand in hand.

Filius stood with a huff of indignation, eying his two fuming colleagues. "Albus, I have lessons to grade. If we are going to go over old ground, I'd rather be doing something more useful with my time."

Albus blinked as if called back from whatever musing he was contemplating and nodded. "Quite right. Quite right. I was just wondering what else will our Mr. Twist be writing about for his next column?" His face creased in a worried frown, stroking his beard.

Filius agreed. " We are all wondering as well. I cannot wait!"

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Lord Peter looked over the legal brief he had just been handed. Both he and Lord Harry had been wondering when the man would get off his bum and file the necessary paperwork. Although Sirius Black is now a free man, Head of an Ancient and Noble House and Lord Potter's godfather, Lord Peter knew the man wasn't fit to be a parent. The reports of his doings since being declared a free man were proof enough of that.

No. Sirius Black would be in for a rude awakening at the hearing if he thought Harry would tamely allow him to have custody after his recent lack of concern.

The stack of files that dealt with the young Potter heir was growing as more information came to light. Albus Dumbledore had a lot to answer for. The number of laws he had broken, Wizarding as well as Muggle, was staggering.

How could someone with that much power, politically and magically, justify what he did to an innocent baby, a child?

One thing was sure, he would have his chance to explain his actions soon. . .in court.

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Alright, we didn't write Hermione's reaction to the article in this one. Chapter 19 is done and needs a bit more polishing and she is there in all her glory.

Frau and I cackle over the reactions/reviews from the last chapter. Special thanks to one review that mentioned Cresswell. We checked and found that he actually faked his credentials in canon.

A warning: The next article has some statistics, as we have said in the past, we made them up. They may be right, they may be wrong, we are only doing this for fun. Statistical Accuracy is not guaranteed.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau.

Chapter 19: Pure Blood versus Muggle Born?

Harry walked into the library to finish his Charms essay. What he saw made him stop and stare. Hermione Granger was almost buried under a table piled high with books, parchments and pamphlets. Harry was accustomed to seeing her surrounded by books, but to this extent was highly unusual. He knew however, a Hermione on a mission was a scary thing and so he approached warily. Two questions remained, what crusade was she pursuing this time, and how long had she been here?

"Hermione? Hermione?" Harry whispered, looking around for the formidable Ms. Pince.

"Huh? What?" Hermione blinked up at him, as she put down her quill. "Oh, Harry."

"Well! For someone who has been harassing me for weeks about being her friend, you seem annoyed to see me," Harry said, trying to keep the bitterness out of his voice. He sat in a chair beside her, carefully avoiding the pile of books in front of him.

"Oh Harry, it isn't that," Hermione said with a sigh. She looked around then whispered. "I'm trying to prove that Oliver Twist is wrong about career choices in the Wizarding World. I mean, Professor McGonagall said I could be anything I wanted, including the future Minister of Magic."

"And now?" Harry asked.

Hermione looked like she was ready to burst into tears. "Twist was right! In the history of the ministry, no muggle-born has ever risen to the position of Minister. In fact, only one half-blood ever did and that's because he was born to an ancient and noble pure blood house himself, and had the full backing of that House. Why Harry? Why did Professor McGonagall lie to me?"

"Have you asked her?"

Hermione sighed, rubbed her eyes and shook her head. "I've been afraid to."

"Are you a Gryffindor or not, Hermione?" Harry challenged her.
"There's nothing wrong with asking questions, it's not illegal."

It had come as quite a blow to Harry too, when the Unspeakables had answered his questions about careers in the Wizarding World. According to them, about the only way a muggle-born could get anywhere was to marry into a well to do pure blood family, like his mother had.

And according to the goblins, the Potter men had been a law unto themselves. They'd had the political clout and wealth to do whatever they wanted. Unfortunately, now that Harry was the last of his line and still underage with almost no training in the political arena, the Potter clout was fading away. The goblins blamed Dumbledore more than anyone for that.

Harry was pretty sure the old meddler had his own reasons for leaving him so woefully ignorant of his heritage, but he couldn't figure out what they were. The goblins and Lord Peter mentioned something about a prophecy which was being very closely watched, not only by the Unspeakables, but by Dumbledore as well. If Harry wanted to view that prophecy it would have to wait until the Christmas holidays when he was away from Hogwarts and Dumbledore's control.

"I'm sorry, Hermione," Harry said, bringing his thoughts back to the present.

"What for? It isn't your fault," Hermione sniffed, rubbing her eyes.
"I'm going to owl my parents with these statistics, they'll probably pull me from Hogwarts. And furthermore, I'm going to advise every other muggle-born in this school to do the same!"

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The Heads of the Job Placement, Career Management and Ministry Panel were having their own meeting after Fudge threw down the ultimatum.

"How many muggle-borns owled you for information?" asked the head of Job placement.

"About 378 adults and 38 minors including a very irate muggle-born by the name of Hermione Granger."

"Isn't she one of Potter's little friends?" asked the Head of Career Management.

"Oh yes," came a reply with rolled eyes. "She wanted to know why she was even given a talk about career opportunities if she wasn't going to get anywhere in the Ministry."

"What did you tell her?"

"That it was against Ministry policy to give out that information. What Albus Dumbledore says and does to encourage meaningless expectations in his students isn't the fault of this department."

"Good one mate. Good one."

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Harry watched as the snow fell from the night sky. It was too cold to really go wandering around tonight. Warming charms and wool socks can only do so much to keep a body warm.

He really couldn't sneak out to do any business tonight either. Ron and his dorm mates had decided to have an all-night party. Harry missed discussing things with Lord Peter. He had helped Harry in so many ways. The man may never be the father figure Harry had always longed for, but he has proven trustworthy.

Lord Peter had gone so far as asking about Harry's studies, how his time was spent and if there was anything he wanted to discuss outside of their professional relationship. The man had taught Harry so much about the Wizarding World, his duties as a Lord and obligations, protocol, etiquette and law. Lessons that both Dumbledore and Sirius had neglected.

Harry could understand Dumbledore's reasons, the old coot wanted to keep Harry under his control, but it was Sirius that Harry couldn't figure out. Unless. . . . Sirius figured Dumbledore had already fulfilled that obligation and there wasn't a need. Hmm, that would take some thought.

"Hey Harry! Come join us!" called Seamus.

"Yeah mate! You're missin' out!" laughed Dean.

"Aww leave him alone guys. Harry's not into friendships anymore," mumbled a drunken Ron. "He's still pissed that we didn't buddy up to him over the summer."

"Well, if a friend promised to write, then didn't, I would be pissed to," said Neville, who was slightly less drunk than the others. "'Specially the way he was locked up."

"Not you too, mate! ARGH!" Ron exclaimed. "We coul'n't. Mum 'nnnn Da 'n ol' Wshissker-pussh wou'n't 'low it."

"So? Ne'er stopped ya b'for. If my bessh mate was countin' on me. . ." slurred Seamus.

Ron threw a pillow at Seamus, who threw it at Dean, who threw it at Neville. Soon there was a full blown pillow fight in progress.

Harry got involved when three pillows pounded him at once. Grabbing one, he just had to defend himself. Soon feathers, bits of pillow ticking and fluff flew everywhere. The boys laughed, tearing up the dorm in a rip roaring, drunken brawl.

"GREAT CEASAR'S GHOST! What in Merlin's name is going on in here?" shouted Professor McGonagall as she stepped into the dorm. "You would think someone was dying in here from all the ruckus! Explain yourselves!"

Seamus tried to hide the rum bottle, as Ron tried the same with his fire-whisky. "Nuthin', p'fessor. We were jusht. . ." Seamus said, pausing only to let out a very loud belch. "Oops!" He snickered sheepishly.

"Clean this mess, immediately! And get ready for bed. I will deal with your punishments tomorrow morning."

Five boys' voices echoed. "Yes P'fessor McGonagall."

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The next morning, Harry and his dorm mates appeared in their Head's office. Only Harry and Neville awoke that morning without a headache. The two looked at each other and shrugged. They doubted that anyone was going to get to visit the infirmary this morning, that meant their roommates would just have to live with their hangovers.

"I over look many things in my house, even the occasional drunkenness. But when I am awakened out of a sound sleep by a prefect, who had repeatedly, tried to tone down your fun, I draw the line. What do you have to say for yourselves?"

Harry and Neville looked at each other. Neither would rat out their dorm mates. However, Ron was a different matter. He couldn't keep his mouth shut.

"Aww. . . we was havin' a bit of fun. Tryin' to get Harry to let loose," Ron said, clutching his head.

"I see," the professor said, looking over at Harry.

"Do you have anything to say, Mr. Potter?"

"Professor?" Neville jumped in, before Harry could speak. "Harry only got involved in the fight well after it was started. He was busy watching it snow."

"And you Mr. Longbottom?"

Neville shrugged. "I was in it for the fun."

"I see. Well, 10 points each for disturbing everyone's rest, including mine. You will clean up your dorm without help. And I should let you boys with a hangover deal with it alone and not send you to the Infirmary."

Ron, Dean and Seamus groaned in pain.

"However, I am not that cruel. You may go to the infirmary after you clean up your dorm. I am sure Madam Pomphrey will have something to say about your condition in very loud voice. You may go," she dismissed them with a smirk. "Mr. Potter, please stay behind."

When the door closed behind the last one out, the very stern witch turned to Harry. Her eyes softening a bit, "I understand you are planning to spend Christmas with Sirius, Mr. Potter. Is that right?"

"Yes ma'am. He invited me," Harry said. He'd been of two minds about accepting the invitation. He realized it would be expected of him, he just wasn't sure if it fitted into his plans.

"I am also informed that he has applied for custody of you. The headmaster isn't too pleased."

"I know, Professor. I've already had a talk with the headmaster. He feels Sirius isn't fully recovered from his ordeal and that returning to my aunt's is for the best," Harry said with a sigh, rubbing the back of his neck. "Professor? What do you think?"

"What I think isn't important, Mr. Potter. My only concern is knowing that you've thought it out fully and understand just what all is entailed."

"Believe me, Professor, I realize that," Harry said. 'Typical,' he thought. 'Why do I even bother asking for advice from her?'

"Well, I won't keep you, Mr. Potter."

"Thank you Professor."

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Sirius was enjoying his morning cuppa when his copy of the Quibbler arrived. He was enjoying it more and more as Twist started putting digs into long standing pure blood traditions and bigotry. Opening his copy, Sirius' eyes grew wider as he read.

Pure Blood versus Muggle-Born, who will win?

Today I came across an interesting sight. Hermione Granger being reamed out by Madam Pince. That's right. The know-it-all of Gryffindor was being lectured about the care of books. And what brought that on? Why me, of course.

One thing that our Ravenclawish Gryffindor can't stand is being bested. I knew something that she didn't. From the gossip I heard in passing, she refused to leave the library until she found every bit of information about career placements for muggle-borns.

Well, I could've told her that the information wasn't there. The information is in the Hall of Records and in the Ministry Library which, by now, Minister Cornelius Fudge has locked down tighter than Professor Snape's Potion cabinets. I should know, I owled for some information and was told everything had been sealed by order of the Minister. Now, just what is the good Minister afraid of? Hmm? Could this mean that I am right and the Minister just doesn't want to face the truth?

Could he be afraid that the muggle-borns would view this as another attempt to control them and keep them second class citizens? Do the muggle-borns know they out populate pure bloods by 12 to 1? That many of their muggle-born kindred are leaving magical Britain and by leaving, they take the future of our magical communities with them?

Fact: The birth rate of Muggle-born children, in recent years, out numbers the pure blooded by seven to one. That means for every one pure blood born there are seven muggle borns. Half Blood children also out number the pure-bloods by three to one. These figures do not take into account those children of pure blood families born as squibs.

Fact: If one did a heritage test on muggle-borns you would find that they, in fact, have at least several magical or squib ancestors in their family lines. I found this out by querying the Goblins. Not only do they keep self-updating records, they can administer the heritage test - for a small fee, of course.

Fact: Test results of performance on practical level exams of Hogwarts students in the past decade show that muggle-born and half bloods, on average, hold more magical power in their core than the pure blood students.

Fact: Within pure blood families, the birth rate for squibs and birth defects has risen appreciably in the past century. Again, you can find this out in the Hall of Records. Well you could, but by now, the Minister has sealed off access to all Department Records. I'll let you

in on a secret, the Goblins also have these records, they are needed for inheritance purposes, and for a fee you can get a copy of them along with a blood seal assuring their authenticity.

In doing the math, I've come up with a very horrifying discovery. The muggle population in Britain, as of the year 1995: Great Britain ranked 20th in world with a muggle population of 58,426,014. As of 1995, the British Wizarding World population numbered less than 75,000.

Again, if you don't believe me, ask yourself this: Why is everyone in the ministry so afraid that they have sealed off key areas where this information can be found? These records are a matter of public domain. In other words, you have the right to access them freely. It would seem that our minister has over-stepped his authority.

I ask you now, can we afford losing one drop of magical blood no matter its source?

Before anyone gets too upset, I must point out that I got most of my information by writing to the International Wizarding Council and the muggle British Census Department.

I found it interesting that the IWC too is keeping abreast of Britain's Wizarding World's declining numbers. They haven't gotten involved as it is an internal affair, but as more and more muggle-borns leave Britain to make a better life for themselves, and strengthen their new homelands, the concern grows.

-Oliver Twist

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Just wait, Hermione's melt-down is only starting. She will have more to say in later chapters.

As for the reviewer that suggested no one reads our work and it is nothing but cliches, I would like to know where he/she found this story and on what forum also posted this negative review. Frau and I are very curious old tabbies and our tails are twitching. We just want to know.

Thank you all for all the reviews, good/bad/and indifferent, we appreciate them all.

BTW, it's snowing again, and the next reviewer who hopes it continues to snow so we can update faster, can come and shovel my sidewalk for me. (grins)

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 20: A Call for Treason

The day after Oliver Twist's column appeared in the Quibbler, the atrium of the ministry was filled with irate people demanding explanations. The witches and wizards manning the information desks had, by mid-morning, called for aurors to guarantee their safety.

As if that wasn't enough chaos, hundreds of owls soon filled the space above the floor, each one fighting for a place to land and be relieved of their letter.

Between the screaming of angry people, hooting of impatient owls and the resultant flurry of feathers and owl droppings, it didn't take the aurors long to close off all entrances to the ministry. Many repelling charms, along with threats of arrest, later and the atrium was quiet once more.

The shell-shocked personnel and weary aurors were given restorative and calming draughts before being sent home.

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While the aurors were busy in the atrium, an emergency meeting of the Wizengamot was called for that afternoon. To have their way of life questioned in such a blatantly disrespectful manner offended them deeply! As the membership filed into the Wizengamot chambers, few took note of the many seats that remained empty.

All seats were inherited, passed down through the generations from one pure-blood head of house their heir. The empty seats were sad reminders of the many family lines that had died out, for one reason or another.

Several seats were held by proxy by another noble house as the current heir was either a minor, or had been disowned by the family head and declared as unfit to serve. Many seats went vacant because of the war with He-Who-Must-Be-Named. He had targeted certain families, wiping them out root and branch, leaving no known survivors. No one knew why they had been so thoroughly eradicated save the one who ordered their demise.

Albus Dumbledore, Supreme Mugwump of the Wizengamot, held several proxies, including the Potter seat. Many wondered if the old wizard would willingly yield it to Potter when he came of age. It was a well known fact that Albus Dumbledore held his power close.

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"Overlord Ragnok!" A flustered goblin panted, " You are needed on the main floor, my Liege."

Ragnok looked up from the papers he was reading. "What is it Stoneblade?"

"The floor is filled with Wizards and Witches, all wanting to take the heritage test!" Stoneblade wrung his hands. "Those wishing to actually do business with us are being crowded out!"

Heaving a long-suffering sigh, the elder goblin rose from his ornate desk. " Very well, call up another cohort of guards in full armor and meet me on the main floor in 5 minutes." Steelblade didn't bother to answer, simply turned and ran from the room.

"Ah, Oliver Twist. I knew you were going to poke the anthill," Ragnok chuckled. Turning to his desk and carefully gathering the papers he'd been reading, he placed them in a small hidden vault for later. He then quietly left the office closing the heavily warded door softly.

The main floor of the bank was churning with activity. Wizards and Witches were struggling to get to an open teller, all of them waving a copy of the Quibbler at any goblin who made eye contact.

"SILENCE!" A guttural voice roared. "Those wishing the heritage test will follow me!" The armored and fully armed goblin turned and stalked down a long hall. At the end of it double doors stood open, revealing a large room with four desks, each manned by a goblin.

When the guard reached the open doors, he turned to face the crowd behind him and snarled, "You will form four lines as you pass these doors. You will wait your turn. If you cause problems you will be removed. . .one way or another." He then turned to stand beside the doors, rested the shaft of his gleaming halberd on the floor and allowed those behind him to enter. The first people to pass him inched by warily, eyes on the wicked weapon in his hand.

It quickly became obvious that he wasn't the only armed guard in the room. Behind each desk sat a goblin, and behind him stood another, armed and ready. The first test, going back 100 years, would cost 5 galleons. For every one hundred years further back the client wished to delve into their heritage, it would cost 1 galleon more. The testing began with quiet efficiency.

Ragnok was glad Harry had given him a heads up on his latest Quibbler column. He'd had his potions staff working over-time to be ready. The elder Goblin chuckled to himself. "Might have to make that boy an honorary goblin if he keeps adding to our coffers this way. If this doesn't wake up the pure-blooded fools, nothing will! I wonder, do wizards have family reunions?" His cackle made those who heard it shiver.

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The headlines in both the Quibbler and the Daily Prophet the next morning blared out the results of the emergency session.

Special Edition

Emergency Wizengamot Session Issues Arrest Warrant for Oliver Twist for Treason

Yesterday afternoon, in an emergency session of the Wizengamot, a majority vote was passed for the immediate arrest of 'Oliver Twist' for treason.

"He is threatening our way of life," said Cornelius Fudge, Minister of Magic. "This Oliver Twist must be stopped!"

"The facts he (Oliver Twist) is mentioning in his articles are taken out of context and only serve to incite panic and foment insurrection," said one Wizengamot member, who asked not to be named.

Mr. Twist's articles started last summer in the Quibbler as a letter to the editor asking questions. Last September, Mr. Twist was hired by the Quibbler as a columnist. Later, the column was picked up by the Daily Prophet. Rumors have it that two more newspapers are vying for the syndication rights as well.

"My daughter enjoys the ways he 'pokes at the old fuss-pots,"

said another Wizengamot member who also wished to be unnamed. "I had to side with the minister, though. Mr. Twist is attacking our way of life and must be stopped."

Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement (DMLE) was unavailable for comment. However, her department issued a brief statement on her behalf.

"The law must be upheld at all costs. We will comply with the wishes of the Wizengamot in pursuing this matter to the fullest extent of the law. Anyone with information about Oliver Twist is asked to contact the DMLE immediately."

On the back page of the paper was a small advertisement that read:

To All Citizens:

The Ministry Library and Hall of Records are closed to the public until further notice. Further, anyone needing copies of records must submit paperwork to the Ministry stating who wants the information, the purpose of the request, and who will have access to said information.

Individuals requesting sealed information will also be required to take an oath prohibiting the use of said information for any purpose(s) save that stated. Sharing of this information with any unauthorized person(s) will have severe legal consequences. By order of Cornelius Fudge, Minister of Magic.

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Albus looked over the students in the Great Hall as many read the announcement. A low grumbling noise could be heard. Many of the pure blood students looked vindicated.

Draco Malfoy was looking particularly pompous today. He wore a satisfied smirk and laughed arrogantly every time he heard a muggle-born or Ravenclaw give an indignant squeak..

A glance at the Gryffindor table showed they were as outraged as the others. That didn't look promising. Of all the houses, the Gryffs

were the most volatile, plunging head first with little thought for consequences when they took up a cause. And since one half, or better, of their house were muggle-borns and half-bloods, there was going to be trouble.

Albus gave a despondent sigh. Life just got more complicated.

Severus sneered as he read the article. "Well. That's that!" he said, folding the paper.

"How so?" Minerva asked, over her teacup. "If anything, the Wizengamot just validated Mr. Twist's articles! By closing the Hall of Records, Cornelius confirms that the information in Mr. Twist's article was correct."

Filius smiled. "The American muggles have a saying, 'It's like closing the barn door after the animal has escaped.'"

Severus snorted as he stood. "Well with the Ministry closing ranks, it is going to be difficult to prove, isn't it?"

"Only if you don't know where to look," Filius muttered to himself.

"Their stupidity knows no bounds!" Snapped Pomona. "They are so terrified of a child's words that they want him arrested for treason? Not even He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named has earned that kind of a response! I guess what they say is true. . .the truth hurts."

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Ragnok was relaxing in his private office after a long day of overseeing the chaos caused by Oliver Twist's column. He was just raising a crystal goblet to his lips for a final sip of Goblin whiskey when he was once more interrupted.

"My lord Ragnok," a hesitant voice squeaked. "The Mistress of Knowledge is here to speak with you!"

"What?" Ragnok almost choked. "Why? Never mind! Show her in immediately." He stood, quickly, spelled his robes clean and waited respectfully for her to enter.

His bow was low and reverent as the small cloaked and hooded figure swept into his presence. "Greetings, revered Lady. How may this warrior serve you?"

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Amelia Bones was beyond pissed. To have her name come up in the Special Edition, and have someone in her own department dare to issue a statement without her knowledge was infuriating!

However, picking up a file out of a concealed vault, she smiled. She would deal with her department's leak soon enough. This was more important.

She stepped out of her office and announced that she was out for the day and left a set of standing orders. No one was to talk to any reporters and if any information on Mr. Twist did come in, everyone was to sit on it until her return. No one from DMLE was to talk to anyone outside the department, for any reason. If they did, they would be walking a permanent beat at Azkaban, without hazard pay.

An hour later found Amelia quietly sipping tea at Number 10 Downing Street as the Prime Minister looked through a file stuffed with reports and newspaper clippings. She was a creature of law, and while a pure-blood, could no longer condone the bigotry and prejudices of the Wizarding World.

To condemn a child for treason was unconscionable!

She'd tried to persuade the Wizengamot not to go the route they took, but only a handful listened. Now they would have to pay the price for their arrogance.

She was not about to let anyone railroad another person into Azkaban without due process, not while she was Department Head of Law Enforcement.

"There is more to this, isn't there?" The Prime Minister queried, looking up from the papers he was scanning.

"Yes sir. There is."

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Arthur was worried as he stepped out of the loo. This was wrong on so many levels. People were forgetting the lessons learned when Sirius Black was found to be innocent of all charges after spending twelve years in Azkaban. His contacts told him to sit tight and wait out the storm in silence.

"Mr. Weasley?" called a clerk, running towards him.

"Yes Marge?"

"There's an emergency departmental heads meeting in 30 minutes."

"Oh Merlin's name, now what?"

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Rita Skeeter was in seventh heaven. She had just been handed a license to smear Twist's reputation to the four winds. Any dirt she could find would be published by order of the Ministry under the guise of public safety. He was to be made an example of for 'the greater good.'

According to her directive, she had been given license to tag along with the aurors when they questioned the editors of the Quibbler and the Prophet.

As stated by this Twist's articles, he's a student currently attending Hogwarts. Someone in that maze of hallways and classrooms should know at least something. Should she wait for the aurors to turn their attention in that direction, or use her animagus form and just hang around? It was amazing the things one could overhear when one was too small to be noticed.

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Harry was reading a note penned to him from Xeno Lovegood. "If you want to view paradise, simply look around and view it," he whispered to himself.

Harry smiled. He was sure he had heard that quote before but not sure where. At least he was safe for the moment. The remedial lessons were easier to bear now that Harry, thanks to Healer

Atwaters, had a handle on it. Sure, he was still getting mind raped twice a week, but at least Snape couldn't find what Harry didn't want him to.

"Oh there you are!" came a childish sing song voice from a small alcove. "Did the nargles hide you again?"

Harry paused, stunned.

A slender figure with long blonde hair appeared in front of him wearing Ravenclaw robes.

"Hello Harry Potter. Did you lose something too?" she asked in a dreamy voice.

"Uh no?" Harry replied, a bit confused.

"If you want to view paradise," she said as she turned away. "Simply look around. Don't worry, Daddy will protect you. He's good at that." She started to skip away.

"HUH! What? Who are you?" Harry called after her.

"Why, I'm Luna Lovegood." Her breathy voice drifted back to him as she disappeared down the stairs.

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A/N: A cookie if anyone can tell me where the quote that Mr. Lovegood sent Harry came from.

Well, thank you all for the lovely thoughts, we didn't get the snow we were promised. Thank goodness!

We are going to let Hermione boil for a bit before the teapot whistles.

Thanks for all the reviews. We now have over 2,000. We must be doing something right (well not wrong anyway).

For those saying not a super Harry or Harry being heir to everything, we are trying our best to keep it believable. Harry is after all according to canon, the heir to Gryffindor, the rest is up to artistic license. Frau and I hope you will enjoy our little plot twist that is

coming up. We work hard to keep this believable. Sometimes, we don't succeed but we do try.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 21: Don't Get Mad Get Even

Xeno Lovegood sat in the office of the Daily prophet drinking tea along with Emily Anderson, Lord Charles and two barristers. The five were going over the edict that had come down from the Wizengamot. "Surrender all information on Oliver Twist or face a year in Azkaban for abetting treason."

"Well?" Emily asked, nervously. After all, she was the one that gave the note to Mr. Lovegood which started this chain of events.

One of the barristers, a middle-aged man in a rumpled mixture of muggle and wizarding attire, cleared his throat and in a husky, whiskey voice spoke up. "The Wizengamot doesn't have a case. In fact, they are breaking several of their own laws, not to mention the Queen's treaty themselves."

"Oh? Is that treason as well?" Emily asked. "I would rather have thought that it was more like sedition instead of treason."

"It is indeed," said Lord Peter. "However, in their arrogance, the Ministry of Magic are usurping the Crown's authority. They have no right to declare treason."

Lord Peter looked at through the file in his hand. "My esteemed colleague, Mr. Horace Rumpole, and I have read Mr. Twist's articles with great relish. It is about time someone started to ask questions. That the someone asking questions is a teen age boy is perfect."

"However," Horace Rumpole chuckled, sounding as if he was clearing his throat. Looking a bit gleeful he added, "Nothing in these articles promotes treason, or even sedition. Nothing the boy wrote is false nor does it, 'fomenting insurrection'. In fact, according to what he did write, it was understated at best and drawn from ministry records themselves. If I didn't know any better I would say that someone on the inside, perhaps the Unspeakables, are helping him."

Lord Charles sputtered into his tea cup. "Surely you don't mean that Horace! What is your proof?"

Horace looked thoughtful for a moment. "The information is too wide in scope, to inclusive for a school boy to know. Even if he does

profess his source is the Hall of Records, the amount of time he would have to spend to find his information would hardly leave him time for his school work. No, I would say that the Unspeakables may well be helping him. They are the only ones who would have unlimited access to the information, sealed or not. Now, this information isn't to be published, or leave this room." The barrister gave a knowing look to the editors and reporter.

"So what do we do now?" Lord Charles huffed. "The ministry has issued a writ for us to turn over any and all documentation we have on Oliver. I for one don't want to go to Azkaban, but I refuse to give up a fellow journalist."

"What little we do know will hardly satisfy the ministry, and as for documentation? Most of that lies with the goblins, and I wish the ministry would try and force them to hand it over!" Xeno grimaced.

"That's were I come in," Lord Peter soothed. "I am the barrister for the Potter family. As you know, they own major shares in both your papers, and since I am their attorney of record, I am here to protect their interest. I suggest that if the Ministry is so anxious to get their hands on Oliver Twist that you post a special edition detailing just how you plan on responding to their illegal demands."

"Quite right. Demand that your complaint be taken to a court of law," Rumpole chuckled. "That would in effect nullify the Wizengamot's ability to rule on this matter, it would be a conflict of interest. That would only leave an international wizarding or Her Majesty's court. "

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Hermione plopped down beside Harry with a crumpled letter in her hand. "Harry? Can we talk?"

Harry looked up. "About what?" he asked, warily.

"I got a reply back from my parents. I told them that my career options were next to nil after Twist's article."

"Oh?" Harry asked, putting down the essay he was working on. He took in her harried appearance. "Something wrong?"

"They are talking about pulling me from Hogwarts after my O.W.L.S. They said that they refused to pay for substandard education. They offered to hire tutors for me to catch up on my muggle education. I have to make up my mind on what I want."

Harry sighed and pulled his friend into his arms as she sniffled, snuggling closer. "Don't worry Hermione. It'll work itself out."

"You were right, Harry," she whispered into his shirt. "I should not have listened to Professor Dumbledore. I'm so sorry, will you ever forgive me?"

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That evening a special edition of both the Quibbler and the Daily Prophet came out. As both papers were running Oliver Twist's articles, both were coming under fire.

Special Edition

Ministry and Wizengamot in Violation of Basic Tenets of British Law

Could Their Actions Threaten the Wizarding World?

Since the vote to arrest Oliver Twist for treason was handed down and sanctioned by both the Wizengamot and the Minister of Magic, both the Daily Prophet and the Quibbler have been brought under heavy criticism by the ruling and judicial bodies of our government. However, these venerable bodies have failed to uphold the laws they were sworn on their magic to uphold.

If the ministry and the Wizengamot wish to pursue legal action, they must file such action in a court of law, and rule themselves out as said court due to conflict of interest.

That would leave their only recourse the ICW or her Majesty's court.

We, of the Daily Prophet and the Quibbler, refuse to turn over any information about Mr. Oliver Twist. The newspaper has the right to protect their sources and staff against persecution if the articles published can be verified. As of this date, all of Mr. Twist's articles can be proven as fact. He assures us he has the original copies of his facts and statistics.

We stand behind Mr. Twist and applaud him on his integrity.

Lord Charles Witherspoon

Xeno Lovegood

Editors-In-Chief

Daily Prophet
The Quibbler

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Harry was sitting in the Common Room. He hadn't been able to escape all week from his friends. They had been clinging to him like limpets. It was as if they were on a mission to track him down and poke their noses into his business. Hermione was especially clingy since her parent's letter. Harry wanted to pull his hair out.

As he stared into the blazing fire in the fireplace, his thoughts were on the arrest warrant for Oliver. He had to admit that he was very nervous about being arrested. It brought back the memories of the past summer, a locked room and food through a cat flap. Harry shuddered.

Professor Flitwick had reassured Harry that his lips were sealed. No one was going to hear anything about Mr. Twist from him. Further, he confided to Harry with a toothy smile, goblins are immune to occlumency and veritaserum.

Harry looked down at the Marauders' map and noted that Rita was also on the prowl. She had been at the castle for a week now trying to get information on Oliver.

'All luck to her, she'd need it,' Harry thought with a smirk. She had been harassing students and staff all week. He was sure she spent as much time as a beetle as she did a human trying to get any gossip she could.

The rumor mill was going crazy and many students were running scared. Harry had taken the precaution of spelling his bed, the area around it and the bed curtains to repel all insects.

He snorted. It was times like this that he wished he had a few muggle items here. Ant traps came to mind, as did a fly swatter.

Dobby had also been warned of her animagus form and been promised several sets of warm and colorful socks if he managed to capture her in beetle form. The house elf was currently dressed in khaki shorts and a safari hat, stalking the halls invisibly, large glass jar in one hand and a lid in the other. He could've sworn that he heard Dobby once say, "Here buggie buggie buggie."

Harry was wondering when they would start breaking out the truth serum and calling for loyalty oaths. He wondered how he was going to manage if and when they did.

Now if only he could just get away from Hermione's obsessive need to study and Ron's demands for chess matches.

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Cornelius Fudge walked into number 10 Downing Street for his quarterly meeting with the Prime Minister. He was convinced this would be a typical, short meeting. Except for the business with that brat Oliver Twist, Cornelius really didn't have much to report and the less he reported, the better for all concerned.

The wizarding government was running smoothly with no sign of the return of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, despite what Dumbledore and the Potter brat said. No, this meeting would be a pleasant chat, bit of tea and a few platitudes. Business as usual.

"Ah, come in Cornelius," said the prime Minister with a cold, predatory smile. "Have a seat and give me one good reason why I shouldn't have your Wizengamot disbanded with you and Albus Dumbledore up on charges? After all, you both are leaders of a government that is denying more than half of its citizens their rights under British law."

Well, maybe not all tea and crumpets. Fudge whimpered.

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Harry finally got some time alone. He was sitting in his bed with Dobby standing guard. It was early and he had pleaded a headache. Of course, Hermione wanted to take him to Madam Pomphrey right away and Ron wanted to get Professor McGonagall.

However it was Seamus that spoke up. "He looks fine to me. Maybe he just wants some time alone? You two have been hanging on him all week. Maybe he wants to wank alone, unless you want to hold his willy for him?" He leered, wagging his eyebrows suggestively.

Hermione ewww'd and blushed. Ron looked like he was about to be ill as everyone in the common room laughed. Harry blushed heavily but didn't say anything. Trust Seamus to come up with a very lewd idea. Bless him!

"Hey Seamus, you said I could borrow your latest Playwitch, right?" Harry called back, insuring that he would definitely be alone for the time being. He grinned as Hermione and Ron fled the dorm for the library and parts unknown.

It wasn't wanking, or anything of that nature, even if he did have the copy of Playwitch tucked under his pillow. He was too busy going over everything that Lord Peter had sent him and all the mail from both editors.

At least he didn't have to worry about Rita. She was hanging around the Ravenclaw dorms tonight, hoping to find a clue that would lead her to Oliver. The betting pool had given her many ideas on just who Oliver could be but no student was willing to come out and speak to her.

So far, Harry had been reassured that neither editor would give any information to the aurors. He wasn't too sure about Dumbledore. The old coot was awfully quiet on the subject.

Also, one of the letters he had received from Dobby was very strange. It was from Ragnok and contained a small corked vial. It looked empty and Harry puzzled over it until he read the letter it came with.

Dear Lord Potter,

Please place your memory of the ritual used to restore the Dark Wizard in this vial. It may be crucial to your quest.

-Ragnok

Harry decided he would puzzle over the strange request later as he took pen to paper and wrote his next article.

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Mayhem, Sedition and Treason?

As I sit back and watch the mayhem that my articles are generating, I have to wonder. Why am I wanted for treason? Where is the treason in asking questions of adults, or in stating true facts? Is it not the job of adults to teach children about their world, and answer their questions truthfully? How are we supposed to learn unless we ask questions? Even questions that might provoke and dismay those in power. How else is a child to learn?

I sit in the Great Hall and watch as professors of great learning and supposed wisdom run around as if the world is on fire and they don't have a clue how to put it out. Why are they searching for me, instead of defending my right to ask the difficult and embarrassing questions? They, after all, are the teachers.

Everyone says that Hogwarts is the safest place to be in all of the Wizarding World. I can't say I believe it. Is having dozens of Dementors attack a Quidditch pitch full of helpless students safe? Is being petrified in the halls safe? Is being told by the headmaster to, "stay away from a certain corridor if you value your life," safe? Is having a troll running loose in school safe? I, for one, think the answer to all of these questions is a resounding "No!"

It would seem some of the teachers, including the headmaster, are too concerned with their image and the school's reputation to worry about student safety. It also must be mentioned the extent to which they are willing to go to maintain the status quo. Better they should be giving the students the tools they need to live a long, productive and well informed life.

My last observation needs to be shouted aloud until it sinks into the hearts and minds of the administrators of this school.

Quit dividing the school between houses and blood lines! The sorting hat is right, and if an inanimate magical artifact can see the problem, then one would think the wise and learned could as well.

Now is the time to band together, before the world as we know it ceases to exist due to blind prejudices. It really is much simpler to repair something before it is completely crumbled to ruin than it is to build anew. Especially true of the Wizarding World — once we are 'outed' to the muggles there is no going back. Three things that can never be recalled; a loosed arrow, a cast spell, and a secret revealed.

Last I'm very disappointed, but not surprised, that the Wizarding government is calling for my arrest. A wise muggle once said, "A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right." The man was Thomas Paine, born in England, was one of the founding fathers of the United States. I doubt many pure bloods know him, especially not Binns.

I will keep writing as long as I am able. Thank you all that support me. I am but a voice calling in the darkness, looking for a candle to light my way.

-Oliver Twist

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Well, my goodness, the chaos Frau and I caused asking you to guess the quote. It was from the original Willy Wonka movie with Gene Wilder. For those that got it right (and for those that didn't), instead of sending cookies or typing out a recipe, go to GenkaiFan's profile. I placed my all time favorite recipe there. Be warned. It is very basic and very expensive but oh so good. Sugar high galore! (If you don't understand the directions, please send me a private message)

Thanks for all the reviews. Frau and I have enjoyed most of them. For those that want more words, sorry it just isn't going to happen unless the story dictates. There is approximately 10 chapters left to go. BTW, ch 14 is hopefully all fixed again.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 22: Time for a History Lesson

Albus Dumbledore sat in his throne-like chair in the Wizengamot Chamber as the members filed in. Cornelius Fudge had called another session three days after the article in the Daily Prophet came out. Although Albus had been against the measure to issue an arrest warrant for Mr. Twist, he was curious to see what information had been gathered. If the aurors returned with Mr. Twist in tow, so much the better.

"Well Cornelius, get on with it," snapped Augusta Longbottom impatiently. "Two emergency sessions in a week is a bit extreme, even for you. So what has your knickers in a twist this time?"

A few nervous titters could be heard. Cornelius looked pained as he stood at the podium. Picking up a parchment scroll, he read:

"By royal decree the warrant for the arrest of Oliver Twist is declared null and void."

Several gasp and murmurs came from the seated members.

"The body known hereafter as the Wizengamot is not invested with the authority to call for the arrest of one of Our citizens for treason. Facts, as presented to Us, show no acts of treason but rather questions from a teenage minor concerning the rights of Our citizens.

Let it therefore be known..."

A low growl rumbled through the chamber as Cornelius paused. The scroll in his hands shook visibly. He licked his lips nervously as he glanced around. Never had he been so thankful for the protection charms on the chamber that prohibited spell casting by its members or spectators. In the past, several members had died due to hexing by irate constituents. After the last episode the chamber had been spelled to quell all magics cast by anyone save the aurors.

He gulped a quick sip of water and then continued: "Let it be known that We, Elizabeth the Second, Queen of the United Kingdom, House of Windsor are greatly displeased with the governing body of the Wizarding World.

"Equality, under the law, is granted to all subjects of Our Realm, not to a select few. That this body so promotes such prejudices as to deny Our citizens, fettered or free, legal rights under Our laws due to blood status, or heritage, is against the laws of Our Commonwealth, and the treaties signed by your forefathers. It shall cease forthwith lest you earn Our further displeasure.

The bodies of the Wizengamot and position of Minister of Magic are hereby apprised that if this situation is not corrected by the end of the year, then We will have no choice but to declare the magical portion of the Magna Carta, along with several other treaties, in abeyance. Should this become necessary, then the governing of the Wizarding World will be returned to Our proper rule and all Wizarding governing bodies will be disbanded."

Cornelius Fudge cringed as he read the royal signature. A deadly calm filled the chamber.

"Just who is this upstart muggle? What rights does she have over us?" shouted Lucius Malfoy as he and several other pure bloods stood in anger while others began to speak.

"By what right does she dictate to us?" shouted another.

"Are you mad?" shouted Madam Longbottom over the pandemonium. When the noise died enough, she went on to say, "Did not your tutors teach you about English Government? She is no mere muggle. She has been our Sovereign since 1952. You would do well to remember this."

"The royal family is from a long line of squibs!" sputtered Madam Marchbanks. "Every now and then, one of them has enough magic to get a letter from Hogwarts."

"But there are no royals at Hogwarts now?"

"No," Albus interjected. "None of the current royal family have shown any signs of active magic."

"So now what do we do? How did we get into this mess?"

A very pale-faced Cornelius opened his mouth, then closed it. He looked at a red-faced, sneering Lucius Malfoy.

Albus closed his eyes, and bowed his head, stroking his beard. It was all coming home to roost. He would not be surprised if he received a summons from the Prime Minister soon as well. After all, he did preside over the Wizengamot and it was his duty to keep Cornelius in check as much as possible.

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Wizengamot Served Notice By Royal Decree!
By Emily Anderson

Today in front of the Wizengamot, and this reporter, Cornelius Fudge stood up and read a declaration from Her Royal Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second. For those that don't know who this is, she is the Royal Sovereign that rules all of Great Britain, magical as well as muggle. The royal family is from a long line of squibs dating back to the time of King Arthur. However, it was King John in 1215 who signed a document called the Magna Carta granting certain rights and liberties to all citizens.

King John also signed a magical document granting the first of many concessions to the Wizarding World, provided that they did not go against British Law. To keep the Wizarding World free from muggle interference several treaties were put in place giving Wizards the right to self-rule so long as they honored the basic tenets of British Law.

By royal decree, we the Wizarding World, must come under proper compliance with muggle laws, or our world will cease to exist as we know it.

To keep our world a secret and to continue with self rule, we must comply.

Merlin help us all.

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Lord Voldemort crumpled the newspaper in a towering rage. How dare they! Those, those muggles have no right to wipe away centuries of traditions just like that! He would not allow it! Lord Salazar Slytherin must be turning in his grave. He, as Slytherin's

heir, would make them pay for their arrogance! After Dumbledore and the brat, of course.

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Arthur Weasley wasn't a man to be rattled easily. After all, he was father to two very resourceful and mischievous boys that thought nothing of making their brothers miserable. Well, he wished he knew who Oliver Twist was.

The Weasley patriarch was torn with pride and dismay at the mayhem. In six months the boy had done what no one else had ever accomplished. He had served the Wizarding World notice that there was a problem and if they weren't going to fix it, some one else would!

The only good thing was the boy had managed to stop Molly from sending howlers. Merlin, that woman had a voice when she got going, but he still loved her dearly.

A memo made its way to Arthur's desk. It was a standard memo by all accounts. After he deciphered the hidden code, Arthur realized he was called to a meeting.

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Deep in the heart of the Ministry was a department that few had little knowledge of.

The meeting room was narrow, with a long, well polished slab of marble for a table with many wooden high-backed chairs around it.

Eight hooded figures walked in. It was hard to tell how many were men and how many were women as they all wore long hooded grey robes. The voluminous robes had concealment, comfort, and anti tracking spells on them, as well as sticking and masking charms on the hoods.

Their leader sat at the head of the table. "Report."

Everyone gave a report on the current situation, but no one had any idea who Oliver Twist was. The clues were there but a key factor seemed missing.

One hooded figure reported that it was Amelia Bones who'd alerted the Prime Minister of their current situation. Many were pleased that she had done so, a few had hoped for a little more time to prepare.

"Enough," Croaker said. "If all are agreeable I would like to offer this Oliver Twist a position with us."

"Why?"

"For one, he is good at concealing himself. Even we can't find him. He's intelligent, cunning and thorough and it shows in his reporting."

"He most assuredly can keep secrets," one of them added to the approving nods of others. "Again, look how no one can flush him out, despite the Ministry's and Dumbledore's best efforts. We have given him a good deal more information than he has used."

"Yet!"

"True, but you will note how carefully he chooses the information he does use," Croaker agreed. "There is an agent at Hogwarts?"

"There is and even he can't spot who Mr. Twist is. Although he does have some suspicions, he reported that he needs firm evidence first before saying anything."

"I would like to know how the editors are getting letters to and from Twist," another said.

"Owl postal drop within Gringotts?" came the reply.

"No, I don't believe he would send any sensitive mail by owl. Too easy to intercept." An older woman muttered. "What does our contact in Hogwarts say?"

"Well, it is the only private way available for a student to send mail. But how is he getting his mail? According to our agent, Albus has the owlery watched and even he, according to all reports, is stumped on how it is done."

"Is it certain that Twist is a student?"

"Yes. The way the articles are worded shows it to be a young person writing and not an adult. Plus, look how he keeps coming back to problems within the school. An adult would have more concern for adult issues and pay less attention to school related matters."

"Speaking of Hogwarts, we need to get Potter in to hear the prophecy soon."

"There is time," Croaker said. "Dumbledore's playing his cards too closely to get Potter away just now. He's got the boy locked down tighter than a Gringott's vault."

"Maybe when Hogwarts breaks for the Christmas Holidays?"

"We will see."

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Vernon Dursley groaned as he read the initial reports from the auditors. How could things go wrong so fast? As it stands, he's looking at repaying back about a quarter of a million pounds sterling, selling his stock portfolio and maybe even facing a term in prison.

To: Mr. Vernon Dursley

The final audit report should be completed by mid-December.

It has been noted that you have been receiving benefits for a minor child, Harry James Potter, since the death's of his parents in 1981. All records and receipts for said child's care will be handed over by the end of December. If any irregularities are found, you will be repaying all funds not spent for the welfare and care of said minor, plus interest, and possible criminal action will be discussed then.

Due to these factors, copies of this report are being sent to Inland Revenue and Grunnings Legal Retainer.

Ragnok

Director of Gringotts Bank

cc

Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams

Inland Revenue

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Ragnok cackled as he read the latest reports on the Wizengamot. The fools. They are only cutting their own throats if they anger the Crown.

"Overlord?" A small goblin broke into Ragnok's musing.

"The Keeper is here to see you again."

"Do not keep her waiting, youngling, show her in!" Ragnok snapped impatiently.

The small goblin ducked back with a squeak, holding the door respectfully for the robed and hooded figure that swept regally into the room. Ragnok rose, bowing courteously gesturing for the figure to be seated.

"Greetings unto you, Overlord," she said, lowering her hood. The door shut silently behind the figure as she, for it was indeed an elderly female goblin, sat in the chair before Ragnok's desk. "I have examined the papers and memories you have sent, and I agree. It would be to our advantage to help this wizarding youngling."

Ragnok nodded his head as he returned to his chair, acknowledging her decision. "It is good to know that I have chosen wisely, Mistress of Knowledge." His deep, gravelly voice murmured. "He has many trials before him, what can you tell me of any aid we may give?"

"There are many ways open to us," her calm, soft voice replied. "The darkness within him, the piece of soul, the dark one planted, it must be removed."

"Soul? He carries a piece of the dark ones soul within him? Can it be done without harming the boy?" Ragnok gasped in shock.

"It will take a very ancient ritual, but it can be done." She nodded as she spoke. "But that is not the original purpose of this ritual," she continued calmly.

"What then . . .?"

"I viewed the memories the boy gave you about the return of this self styled Voldemort. I believe the Ritual of Renunciation, when used with two others, will solve many of his problems."

"And then," she continued, "there is the matter of the claim of . . ." her soft words droned on, leaving Ragnok in a daze.

He shuddered at her words. 'What in the seven hells had he gotten himself in to this time?' With a final shiver he looked into her strange, sightless eyes and listened intently.

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For those complaining about a rich Harry, Frau and I made him rich as Potter's were an ancient house, thus old money. Not much was given in canon, as far as we could see, about how rich Harry was but one clue stands out. Harry's trust vault and its contents. The money had to come from somewhere. It stands to reason. Alright, so it's a weak clue but it works.

BTW, we didn't make Harry as rich as the Malfoys and Harry just hasn't had the chance to flaunt it like certain people. Frau and I can see the Goblins investing the Potter money for Harry. After all, they are in the business to make a profit. Gold lying around doesn't.

Thanks for the reviews. There have been many complaints about the first chapter. We will take another look at it.

Until next time. -GF and The Frau

Chapter 23: Plans Go Awry

Harry smirked as he read the letter from Lord Peter. Two meetings were scheduled after the leaving feast. The first was a secret meeting between Lord Peter and himself to go over everything. The second was to meet with the Review Board, which consisted of Madam Bones and Wizarding Child Services, to decide if enough proof had been gathered for Harry's emancipation.

Sirius was supposed to escort Harry to Gringotts where the meeting with the review board was to take place. As far as anyone knew, Albus Dumbledore wasn't invited. Lord Peter had the old wizard's guardianship quietly revoked so the headmaster's presence wasn't necessary. The notice informing Dumbledore of that fact had been 'accidentally' delayed. By the time he found out, it would be too late to stop the proceedings.

As they left the Defense class room, Harry was called back by Hermione. "Harry? Are you sure it'll be alright for you to go home with Sirius?" she asked with some concern.

"Sure why not?" Harry asked. They had somewhat restored their friendship, but it had been slow going. "Sirius has been cleared of all wrong doing and he wants to spend Christmas with me. What's so hard to understand?" Students passed by on their way to the next class.

Hermione sighed and shook her head. "But Dumbledore. . ."

"Doesn't have a say in this, Hermione. He isn't my guardian."

"But you usually stay here for the holidays," she tried to reason with him.

"True, but you get to spend the hols with your family," Harry looked over at his friend. "Why can't I spend it with my godfather?"

"Of course, but . . ."

"But nothing, Hermione. This is my first Christmas to have with someone that's family, and the Dursleys don't count. They've never wanted me or considered me family," Harry growled. "I'll be fine, Hermione. Don't worry."

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"Mr. Potter," came Professor McGonagall's voice as he was leaving the Common Room to head for dinner in the Great Hall.

"Yes Professor?" Harry asked, turning to face her.

"I see that you didn't sign up to stay for the holidays this year?"

"No, ma'am. Sirius wants me to stay with him and I'm going to. He's got everything planned out for us," the teen replied in a wistful voice.

"Do you think that's wise? After all he isn't your guardian."

"But he's my godfather. Professor?" Harry asked, looking up at her.

"Yes Mr. Potter?"

"Why is everyone suddenly so concerned about where I spend the holidays? No one ever was before. Don't you want me to spend them with the only family I have left? Everyone tells me that Sirius' place is very secure."

"Very well, Mr. Potter."

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Harry was ready to scream. It was Leaving Feast for the start of the Christmas Hols. It seemed that Dumbledore was against him leaving Hogwarts. He went as far as inviting Sirius and Remus to spend it here. He cited the possible danger Harry would be in away from the safety of the castle. Sirius tried to refuse, but Dumbledore was adamant about keeping Harry where he could keep an eye on him.

'Looks like it'll be Plan B,' Harry thought with disgust. He wrote to Lord Peter about the change in plans and requested a timed port-key. There was no way Harry was going to miss his meetings. Sirius would just have to fend for himself. Harry wondered if his godfather had told Dumbledore what was going on. If anything, the old marauder thought it was one massive prank to pull on the old headmaster.

That night Harry received a note and an old coke can from Lord Peter from Dobby. Harry was sure he wouldn't have gotten this far without the little elf's help.

Lord Harry,

It does not surprise me that the headmaster is trying to thwart you. He does, however, suspect something. He does, after all, have friends in the ministry and they have been nosing around, asking questions.

Be careful. The port-key will go off at 9 a.m. tomorrow for us to discuss your briefing. Don't lose it.

-PFA

The next morning, Harry was up and dressed alone in his dorm, well before 8 a.m. The port-key went off as scheduled and Harry landed in Lord Peter's office. Breakfast was waiting.

"Did anyone see you leave, Lord Harry?" asked Lord Peter.

Harry smiled dusting himself off. "Since I am the only one staying in the dorm at the moment and Sirius and Remus aren't expected to arrive until sometime this afternoon, no sir."

"Very well, help yourself to breakfast, as we go over everything for the meeting tomorrow."

"You know, they'll start looking for me when I don't show up for lunch, don't you?" Harry commented as he poured himself a cup of tea.

"You will be back in plenty of time and I have confidence in your skills of distraction," Lord Peter smiled.

The rest of the morning they went over everything in Harry's file, from the sealing of his parents' will to the abuse done by the Dursleys, to the accidental emancipation by both legal authorities in the Wizarding World.

"Do you think it'll work?"

Lord Peter smiled. "I don't see why not. Relax Lord Harry. Between you and Oliver, you have kept this world totally off balance. Something as minor as your emancipation should slip past unnoticed. I salute you for your artful misdirection."

Harry raised his cup in mock salute before sipping.

True to Lord Peter's prediction, no one questioned Harry when he came down for lunch an hour later.

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Sirus and Remus arrived just before dinner that night. Sirus was very apologetic about the change of plans, but Harry brushed it off.

"It's alright, Padfoot," Harry said as they walked to the Great Hall for dinner. "We all know that what Dumbledore wants, Dumbledore gets." Sirius cringed as Remus snorted.

"We need to talk after dinner, cub," Remus said quietly.

Alright," Harry said. "What about?"

"After dinner," was the terse reply.

Dinner that night was chaotic as only two Marauders could make it. Stories about the past as well as a couple of pranks kept the table in an uproar. Severus Snape, sporting a mohawk and neon pink robes, was a hit to everyone but the potions master.

Harry didn't say much as he picked at his food. He wondered just what his godfather and Moony wanted to talk about later. He also didn't like the fact that everyone thought it was alright for the two to torment Snape. Granted Harry didn't like the man but still. . .

"So what did you want to talk to me about?" Harry asked making himself comfortable on the sofa in the guest quarters.

"So this meeting tomorrow," Remus asked. "Why isn't Dumbledore invited? He is, after all, your guardian."

Harry straightened, turning to Sirius. "He knows?"

"Moony overheard me talking to Gringotts," Sirius reassured Harry, glaring at Remus. "Moony here wanted to tell Dumbledore, but I talked him out of it."

Harry sighed with relief. "I guess Dumbledore's notice got lost in the mail or something."

"Cub, Gringotts doesn't lose mail," Remus chided.

"Right, like they didn't lose my bank statements that I never got? Or the fact, that the notice that I was entitled to have my parent's will read when I was eleven was lost? Or the notification assigning Dumbledore as my supposed magical guardian got lost?"

Remus reared back in surprise.

"No, Moony," Harry sighed. "Albus Dumbledore has been keeping my rights and heritage from me. So, it was decided to 'accidentally' lose his notice until tomorrow when the meeting starts. Don't miss understand, he isn't my legal guardian, magical or otherwise. He never was and, after tomorrow, never will be."

Remus looked from Harry to Sirius and nodded his head.

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Harry walked casually into the Great Hall for breakfast the next morning. Hopefully by the end of the day, he would be free of Dumbledore's meddling. The old coot would have better things to occupy his time.

Since there were only a few people staying at the castle over the holidays, only one large table was set up. Many of the places were yet to be filled. Some were reading the Daily Prophet and some were reading the Quibbler. Since the whole tampering with British rule fiasco, the rags had been doing their best to give their readers a bit of a history lesson.

Harry had been pleased to note that many of the pure bloods hadn't been too happy with current events. Many thought that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II wielded no power over the magical community. That was until the Quibbler and the Prophet started to post some of

the more archaic treaties, in full unedited detail, including the 1692 Statute of Secrecy.

The newspapers pointed out that these were magically enforceable contracts. Even if one hadn't signed it personally, the whole community was bound to it through the signatures of the family heads of that time period. If they directly opposed the Crown, The Wizarding World would lose not only their autonomy but also their magic.

An owl dropped his copy of the Quibbler beside him as Harry filled his plate.

Truth or Fiction?

The other day I was listening to the golden trio as they came out of Defense class. They were arguing that it wasn't safe for Potter to leave the castle for the holidays.

I happened to overhear them as they were discussing He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, but Potter insisted on calling him Lord V***. I think I will too as it's easier on the hand to write.

Yes, surprisingly, Potter was saying the Dark Lord's name! I heard Potter mention in passing that the Dark Lord wasn't even a pure blood! This got me wondering. I was curious at some of the other comments I overheard him make in the past, so I went and tried to look up any information on you-know-who in the school library.

Hogwarts' Library is amazing. There are books about everything and anything here. About the only thing you can't find is a good action thriller to sit down and enjoy when you aren't busy working on homework. Or any information about the man who currently holds our world in fear, the so called Dark Lord.

Anyway, I digress. Potter likes to call the him Lord V***, or Riddle, somewhat interchangeably. The Golden Boy refuses to say "He-Who-Must-Not-be-Named" or any other silly aliases. That got me to wondering.

Now Riddle didn't sound like a wizarding family name I'd heard before, so I did some checking. I found a Tom Marvolo Riddle was sorted into the House of Slytherin, and later made head boy in 1943.

He was a half-blood, according to the few scant records I found at school.

With so many questions in mind, I paid a visit to the goblins. Where, for a small fee, I was allowed to research their

self-updating heritage books. Guess what I found?

I started out with the line of Slytherin, for we all know Lord V*** professes to be the last of that line. Well, according to the records, he's lying. A man named Tom Marvolo Riddle was the last of that line, but he died on October 31, 1981. He was the son of Merope Gaunt, last of the pure-blood line of Slytherin, and Tom Riddle a local muggle aristocrat. The heritage book clearly shows there is no direct blood heir to Salazar Slytherin now living.

So, where does that leave Lord V***? Perhaps he suffers from wishful thinking. The heritage books are blood-bound and have never made a mistake in the thousand years they have existed. All I know, is that his loyal followers are following a dream. Or a nightmare? The direct bloodline of the ancient and noble house of Slytherin is no more.

I know these statements can get one killed. But seriously, why isn't anyone questioning what they are told? Why are we giving power to someone that doesn't even like to use his real name? Lord V*** can't be his real name. After all, Lord V***'s claim to Slytherin's blood is false. Perhaps the ministry's claim he is gone is false as well, personally, with their record. . .?

Potter claims otherwise. So who is right and who is wrong? And even more importantly, can we afford to be wrong? Could Potter have been right all along and no one wanted to believe?

Oh by the way, this is my last article until after the holidays.

Happy Christmas.

-Oliver Twist

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Thanks for all the reviews. For those that question how the muggle world would enforced their laws: magical treaties. Well duh. If they could force a 14 year old child into participating in a tournament he didn't enter and bind him through a magical contract, why can't they use enforceable magical treaties between governments with severe penalties?

This will be the last article from Twist until near the end. We know how much you all enjoyed them but things are heating up for Harry.

Until next time. -GF and The Frau

Chapter 24: A Precedent Is Set

Since Oliver's post came out that morning, the headmaster had been fielding questions about Tom, how Oliver got hold of that information, and why it hadn't been made known before.

Harry was grilled for about an hour in Dumbledore's office, then their attention was turned elsewhere. Yes, he and his friends had never been that quiet about discussing Tom and his merry band of miscreants. Harry repeatedly, and in public areas of Hogwarts, told anyone who would listen his views on the upcoming war. After all, since he had been labeled by the ministry as an attention-seeking prat, why not use it? Most had, over time, shrugged Harry's comments off.

Since he had plans with Sirius and Remus that afternoon, Harry was able to sneak away from the Order meeting before Molly could issue an invitation to the Burrow. He was able to plead the need to use the library to get a start on his homework.

The Order members remained in the Headmaster's Office rehashing over the articles and the identity of Oliver Twist, not realizing that he'd just left the office.

Unknown to all, Dobby had, once more, placed Harry's little walkman under Dumbledore's desk. Harry needed to know if they were on to him yet. He had dropped a few clues in his articles and was surprised that no one other than Professor Flitwick had caught on yet. Or maybe they had, and decided that they just didn't believe it?

Harry went up to the boys' dorm, not to retrieve his book bag but to grab the dress robes that Dobby had purchased for him earlier in the school year. Lord Peter had extended an invitation for Harry to change in his office if he couldn't get away in time.

Both knew that by dropping the bomb on Lord Voldemort's identity, Harry would open speculations that he was Oliver. However, if he had done things right, he would be dismissed as usual. Only time would tell. Harry only hoped the information on the heritage books available at Gringotts would prove enough of a false trail to turn suspicion away from him.

He did have an ally in Professor Flitwick who had proof read Harry's articles and added a few details that he had managed to over look. With the professor's help, they didn't look like one of Harry's essays.

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Lord Peter was waiting for him in his office. A quick change and the sloppy looking Gryffindor Harry Potter became Lord Harry James Potter. The dress robe had been tailored to Lord Peter's specifications with the Potter, and Gryffindor crests on them. By the end of the day, Harry would no longer be just an heir, but Lord and head of two houses.

The meeting would take place not in the ministry, as originally planned, but in Gringotts Inheritance Office. Both Healer Atwaters and Lord Peter conferred with Gringotts and decided it would be safer in the long run to have the meeting at the bank. Goblin neutrality would be a huge asset in this case. Wizarding Services and Madam Bones, once brought up to speed on the facts, agreed with the choice of venue.

Harry wondered if Sirius and Remus would show. Last he knew Sirius was shouting insults at Snape while Remus refereed in the headmaster's office. Not the ideal image of a guardian in Harry's opinion. He was still looking forward to Christmas Day together, they had plans of spending it away from Hogwarts in Grimmauld Place as a family. That is, if after this meeting, Sirius would still want to be with Harry.

Time alone would tell.

Lord Peter and Harry were ushered into a posh conference room containing a marble table with gold and semi precious inlaid designs. The chairs were covered with deep maroon velvet and were very comfortable.

Madam Bones and another woman sat side by side across from Harry and Lord Peter. Sirius and Remus had yet to arrive. A goblin came in along with Healer Atwaters.

"It is 1 pm. Time to start. Are we all present?" asked the Goblin.

"No sir. Sirius Black, head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black hasn't arrived."

"We will give him ten minutes then we will start without him," said the goblin, sitting at the head of the table, facing both parties.

Harry sighed and tried not to let the hurt show. He had been willing to give Sirius a chance, but once again, the man was putting others ahead of his responsibilities as his godfather. Lord Peter reached for Harry's hand and gave it a squeeze.

At least here was someone that had been there for him for the past six months. The man had slowly worked his way into Harry's life and proved that he could put Harry first. Harry needed that.

Just before the 10 minutes were up, Sirius rushed in along with Remus, Molly and Arthur Weasley, and of course, Albus Dumbledore.

Amelia Bones stood up. "I understand why Sirius Black is here but not you four."

Sirius sat down beside Harry and whispered, "Sorry pup. They weren't going to let me leave the Order meeting unless I told them why."

Harry scowled as the headmaster and the Weasleys sat across from him next to Madam Bones. Well so much for a quiet hearing. Molly's screeching alone would see to that.

"We are here to ask for custody of Harry Potter," Molly Weasley said, triumphantly.

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Weasley. We don't have any paperwork requesting your guardianship. Besides, this isn't a custody hearing," replied the witch with the WIZARDING CHILD SERVICES crest on her robes. "But an emancipation hearing."

"Sirius, you told me it was a guardianship hearing!" Molly accused.

"You can't mean this! I won't allow it!" Albus Dumbledore roared, his blue eyes flashing.

"You sir, have no say in this matter," Lord Peter stood. "By your own admission, you declared Lord Harry James Potter a legal adult at age 14."

"I most certainly did not! And pray tell, just who are you?"

Lord Peter smiled as he pulled out a file. "I have in my hands a copy of the contract that you witnessed and signed, forcing Lord Harry James Potter to participate in the Tri-Wizard Tournament, against his will, this past school year. A contract that clearly states that the participants must be 17 years of age. By approving this contract, you as Headmaster of Hogwarts, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Supreme Mugwump of the IWC, declared that the minor, Harry James Potter, was a legal adult.

"You and the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, by also allowing said minor to be tried in an adult venue as an adult, for an underage magical offense did therefore, knowingly and willfully, declared Lord Harry James Potter an adult. Sir, you can not have it both ways. You set a magical legal precedent. Madam Bones, I yield to your ruling."

"I object!" Albus Dumbledore shouted, coming to his feet, once more.

"You can't do this!" Molly Weasley screeched, as Arthur placed a hand on her shoulder to keep her from lunging forward.

"I object also," Sirius said from beside Harry. "Harry? Don't you want me as your guardian?"

Remus placed his head into his hands. "I warned you Siri. James and Lily must hate us for failing Harry."

Before Harry could say anything, Madam Bones cleared her throat. "I have looked over the case for emancipation of Harry James Potter, heir by blood to the Noble and Ancient Houses of Potter and Gryffindor. I find several things in this file to be very chilling."

She cleared her throat. "Molly and Arthur, you may leave. This is not about you. You have never petitioned for guardianship in the past, and I fail to see why you do so now. However, this is not a guardianship hearing but an emancipation hearing. You were not requested to attend, please leave now."

Molly huffed, "Now see here!"

"Molly, please, let's go," Arthur said, pulling Molly away.

"But . . . Harry?"

Harry looked up at the woman who wanted only to mother him and gave her a slight smile. "I'm sorry Mrs. Weasley, but it has to be this way."

"Harry," she sniffed, as Arthur pulled her from the room. Over his shoulder, he said, "You are always welcomed at the Burrow son. We still consider you one of us."

"Thank you, Mr. Weasley."

Madam Bones waited until the door closed before starting in. "As I said, I found several disturbing things about this case. One, the way the Potter will was ignored by someone," she paused, looking at Albus Dumbledore, "who swore an oath to uphold the law of the Wizarding World."

A low growl started in the room until Harry elbowed Sirius.

"Two," she cleared her throat, "the same person forcibly obtained guardianship of the Potter heir, once more defying the explicit wishes of the Potter's will. Three," her glared intensified. "The aforementioned person failed his duty as guardian as required by law in that he failed to check on the well being of his ward and further, failed to teach said ward the customs and duties his heritage dictates—leaving him woefully ignorant of our world. Do you see a pattern here, Albus?" she sniped.

Albus squirmed in his chair. "It was all for the Greater Good. The child needed the blood protection that living with his only blood relative could provide. I knew it wouldn't be a happy life but the child would still be alive."

Harry snorted. Lord Peter placed a hand on his arm, giving Harry a look.

Madam Bones snarled. "You usurped the rights of the child and ignored his parent's last wishes. You further ignored the laws

regarding minor magical children. You sealed the will and with the help of someone in the ministry, you kept the WCS from fulfilling their duties. It is a wonder you still have your magic, Albus Dumbledore."

"I only suggested. . .," Albus started to explain.

"And there is the rub," Lord Peter interjected. "Madam, if I may, could you read Healer Atwaters' report to us."

Madam Bones read aloud the report as Lord Peter requested. As each sentence echoed in the silent office, Albus Dumbledore's face paled. Sirius groaned and buried his face into his hands. Remus snarled. Harry remained still as a statue staring mutely off into the distance as a single tear slid down his pale cheek.

"If this is your idea of 'not a happy life,' spare me your idea of a cruel one," Lord Peter said. "I have been in correspondence with Lord Harry since last spring. How we have been doing so, is not up for discussion." Lord Peter stated, stalling the headmaster's questions. "I have been doing what you and Lord Black have failed to do. That is, to teach Lord Harry what it means to be the Head of an Ancient and Noble House. I also will be requesting, if this meeting is successful, that Lord Potter take his seats on the Wizengamot as a full adult."

"You can't do that!" Albus exclaimed, spittle flying. "He is not ready! He doesn't understand the politics involved."

"And who's fault is that?" Lord Peter countered in disgust.

Madam Bones sighed and looked at the witch beside her, who gave her a slight nod. "I, Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, do hereby recognize Lord Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Noble Houses of Potter and Gryffindor, as a full and legal adult with all of the duties and responsibilities entailed. I also do declare that until Lord Potter reaches the age of seventeen he is to have the following advisors, Lord Peter Finchly-Addams and the Goblin known as Ragnok, should Lord Potter need sage advice. So Mote Be."

"No! Stop! I protest!" Albus said, pulling out his wand, standing as a glow of magic shot from Amelia Bones to Harry.

The witch from WCS stood up, "I, Gretta Marchbank, Head of the Wizarding Children Services, do hereby recognize Harry James Potter, Head of the Ancient and Noble Houses of Potter and Gryffindor, as a full and legal adult with all of the duties and responsibilities entailed. I also do declare that until Lord Potter reaches the age of seventeen he is to have the following advisors, Lord Peter Finchly-Addams and the Goblin known as Ragnok, should Lord Potter need sage advice. So Mote Be."

Magic entwined around Harry as he stood straight. He noted the disapproval and anger in the headmaster's eyes and shook his head. "You have never been there for me, Headmaster. Where were you when I was locked in a boot cupboard, crying from hunger? Where were you when my cousin and his gang invented the game 'Harry Hunting'? Where were you when I was forced to compete in the Triwizard Tournament? And lastly, why should I trust you now?"

Harry turned to his godfather. "I'm sorry, Sirius. But I had to do it this way." Then in a small child-like whisper, "Do you still want me?"

Sirius looked up with tears running down his cheeks. He grabbed Harry into a fierce hug. "I know I wasn't there for you, Harry but yes, I still want you."

Harry and Sirius were only vaguely aware when Remus' arms surrounded them both.

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The main reason about no articles is that the next few chapters are only days apart in the time line. Harry just doesn't have time to work on them. Sorry. We hope to fill out the characters involved, so please bear with us.

If I am right badkidoh was our 3k reviewer. Nice job!

Until next time -GF and The Frau

Chapter 25: The Sound of Goblin Laughter

Harry left the meeting with Lord Peter, Sirius and Remus. When they stepped out the door Arthur and Molly were waiting for them.

"Harry is emancipated," Sirius said with a sad look in his eyes.

"Emancipated!" Molly screeched. "Of all the idiotic ideas! Harry James Potter! You aren't old enough to make adult decisions, you're just a child!"

Harry sighed, as he side stepped Molly's move to smother him in an embrace. "I'm sorry Mrs. Weasley, but the Ministry and Professor Dumbledore don't agree with you."

"What do you mean, Harry?" Arthur asked as he tried in vain to calm his hysterical wife.

Harry shrugged. "I don't know all the legal terms, but last year both the Ministry and Professor Dumbledore agreed that I was adult enough to participate in the Tri-wizard tournament, and old enough to be tried as an adult for underage magic. Therefore I must be an adult, right sir?" Harry looked up at Lord Peter.

"That is correct, Lord Potter," the barrister smiled. "Come this way please. There are papers that need to be signed. The goblins should have your family rings ready." Lord Peter ushered his three companions ahead of him with a slight bow, leaving the Weasleys trailing in their wake.

"Harry?" Sirius was heard to query fretfully, "What else do we need to do here?" Remus just pushed him in the direction indicated as the four men walked down another hallway.

"Come along Sirius," Harry said with a patient smile. "I'll explain things to you." He sighed in frustration as Molly dragged Arthur along behind them.

"Harry, my boy," a commanding voice grated.

"Oh Merlin, let's get out of here," Harry groaned as the headmaster bore down on everyone.

"Go, Harry," Remus said. "I'll keep him busy but you owe me."

Lord Peter, Harry with Sirius and the Weasleys following slipped into Ragnok's office. Molly was still huffing about how Harry shouldn't have to deal with adult affairs. In her opinion, he was way too young.

After everyone was comfortably seated in Director Ragnok's office, the goblin pulled out two antique wooden boxes. "I have your rings Lord Potter. Here is the Potter Lordship ring," he said, holding out one of the carved boxes. "And the Gryffindor ring. Go ahead and put them on one at a time. Wait until the first adjusts to your finger, then put on the other."

"Harry, think about what you are doing!" Molly beseeched.

"Madam, you are here as a courtesy. Please remain quiet," Ragnok said, harshly.

"My wife meant no disrespect, sir," Arthur said, placing a hand on her shoulder to keep her quiet.

Harry placed each ring on, one at a time, allowing the rings to magically mold themselves to his finger. The family magics accepted Harry as their own.

As one, they in the room stood and bowed, just as Remus walked in along with Albus Dumbledore.

"Sorry, I'm late but the Headmaster couldn't take no for an answer, again," Remus shrugged, stepping up to Harry. "I see the rings accepted you, Harry. Welcome Lord Potter-Gryffindor."

"Harry, my boy," Albus Dumbledore said, with his grandfatherly disappointed frown. "Do you know what you have done?"

"Yes sir, I do," Harry said. "And it's Lord Potter to you from now on. I took the first steps away from your careless neglect. You are not god, headmaster. You don't know everything."

"Harry! That's no way to speak to the headmaster," Molly chided.

Turning to Lord Peter, and ignoring Molly, Harry said. "Let's go, sir. I am done here for now. Thank you Ragnok." Harry gave the goblin a slight bow.

"Wait for me!" Sirius said, jumping in, taking hold of Harry's robe.

"Wait!" Albus said, reaching out only to be blocked by Remus as the port-key activated before anyone else could grab hold of Harry.

The three landed in Lord Peter's office. Sirius, after getting his laughter under control, said. "Alright, Harry, spill! I think I've been patient enough."

"Have a seat, Lord Black," Lord Peter offered. "Lord Harry and I have quite a tale to tell you."

"First order of business," Harry said pulling out a walkman. "Sirius, you need to hear this. This was recorded a few days before the Leaving Feast when everyone was so concerned about where I was going to spend the Christmas hols. Remember, Dumbledore sometime last fall mentioned closing the school to upgrade the wards. Well, just listen."

"Albus?" came McGonagall's voice from the walkman.

"Come in, my dear."

The sounds of someone sitting and tea pouring were in the background as the two talked.

"So has Harry mentioned were he was going for this holiday with the school closing?" Albus asked casually.

"Sirius has invited him to spend the holiday with him."

"He can't! Harry must return to his relatives. He will be safer there."

"I'm afraid Albus since Sirius is his godfather, he has every right to host him for the hols."

"I fear that Mr. Black just isn't stable enough yet to handle Harry's safety. No, Harry must go to the Dursleys."

Minerva sighed. "I'm afraid you have no say in this Albus. Besides, with the ward updating, he can't stay here."

"Sirius will do what he is told," Albus stated firmly. "However, I will just reschedule the wards. Harry can not be allowed to go with someone as unstable as Mr. Black."

The sound of someone choking on their tea was clearly heard. "Albus! You can't be serious! We need those wards adjusted! You can't sacrifice the safety of all our students for the sake of one."

"It is for the Greater Good, my dear."

Sirius started to growl. Harry sighed as he shut off the walkman. "I'm sorry Sirius, but as you heard, he's willing to sacrifice everyone, even you, to control me."

"What the hell more has he done to you and me?" Sirius snarled.

Harry put the walkman away as Lord Peter called for tea and sandwiches to be served. Harry began his tale. He and Lord Peter had discussed how much they were going to tell Sirius and had come to the conclusion that they didn't want Sirius to know all his secrets just yet.

There were some things that he really didn't trust his godfather with, such as Harry's identity as Oliver Twist. That must remain a secret for now. Although Harry was sure the old marauder would enjoy the irony.

However, he was able to tell Sirius how he got around Dumbledore's little information blackout by using Dobby and the little magically charmed walkman. He also told him how he found out, through the goblins, that Lord Peter had been the Potter's family barrister for decades and things snowballed from there.

"But why didn't you trust me with all this?" Sirius asked, a little heart-broken.

Harry sighed, running his hand through his hair and shaking his head. "Sirius, I love you, but you weren't there when I needed you. You and Remus are the last links to my parents but you have never put me first. How could I trust you? Dumbledore keeps you close to

heel, and you have the tendency to blab to him about things better left unsaid. Like today, you should've just told him your business was personal and left. I just couldn't the chance. "

Sirius hung his head. "When your parents died, I tried to get to you but Hagrid had orders and wouldn't let me have you. I never dreamed he would take you to Petunia. I went crazy. Instead of staying with you, I went after the rat. I am so sorry."

Harry hugged the man. "Sirius, I could forgive you that. You weren't thinking clearly, but after you escaped you still didn't put me first . . ."

Sirius jerked back. "Never, never say that!" he snarled. Then the fight went out of him as he continued. "But you're right. I haven't been a good godfather."

Harry hung his head, with tears in his eyes. "And you always allow Dumbledore to control me. He snaps his fingers and you jump to do his bidding. Just like he did this Christmas. What happened to our plans of a family Christmas?"

Sirius opened his mouth, then closed it. Closing his eyes, he sighed and gave a nod.

"Lord Harry," Lord Peter interjected, breaking the tension. "Director Ragnok has requested that you and I return to Gringotts this afternoon for another meeting."

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Amelia Bones was enjoying a bit of brandy with Gretta Marchbanks. Both witches were celebrating putting one over on the old windbag.

"Here's to a successful maneuver," Gretta said, holding up her brandy.

"Here's to getting one over on the old fart," Amelia said, holding up her glass.

A moment of silence fell as Amelia looked over the Potter files. "I just can't believe Albus bungled one of his plans this badly."

"Let's face it, Amelia. The man is getting senile."

Neither witch noticed a small beetle slipping out under the crack in the door. She had her scoop! It wasn't the one she wanted, but it'll do for now.

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"The child is coming today then?" The cloaked and hooded goblin female queried softly.

"Yes, Wise One, he is due at any moment," Ragnok answered in a respectful manner.

"Good. I will explain to him the simple ritual words he must speak." She was silent then, seeming to withdraw into her thoughts.

Ragnok stood and with a deep bow, he left the room.

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"Lord Harry, now that you are a free adult, I have someone I need you to speak with?" Ragnok asked, ushering the young Lord and his barrister deeper into the halls of Gringotts.

"Director Ragnok, is this necessary?" Lord Peter sighed. "Harry's time is limited and we had thought to celebrate a bit . . ."

"You may have even more reason to celebrate if you will follow me. This goblin has followed our investigation with great interest. This is one of high prestige and to deny her request would bring great insult to the clans." The Goblin leader's feral grin told them he had been up to something.

Ragnok lead them to a pair of high doors with a squad of heavily armed goblins standing guard. Both wizards paused as Ragnok shouted something in gobbledegook. Jumping to attention, the guards moved away from the doors allowing the trio to enter.

Their footsteps echoed off the stone walls. The only light came from torches lining the walls of the room before them. They saw a small cloaked figure sitting in a chair on a slightly raised dais.

Ragnok bowed deeply and addressed the figure with the utmost respect. Confused and a bit overwhelmed, Lord Peter and Harry decided that it would be prudent to follow his example and bow.

"Lord Harry Potter-Gryffindor, Lord Peter Fletchly-Addams, it is my honor to present you to the Goblin Nation's Keeper of Knowledge," Ragnok said solemnly. The pride and awe in his raspy voice told them that this small being was to be treated with absolute respect. "She has come to aid you with knowledge long forgotten by wizard kind."

"L..Lady, I welcome any aid that is offered, to help me in my quest against Voldemort," Harry said as he came up from his bow. Confusion clearly etched in his young green eyes.

"Well said, wizard child," the hooded figure chuckled softly. "Your need is great, Director Ragnok has told me much about you and what it is you face. I was also told that you carry within you a piece of Voldemort's soul from his first life. Is this true?"

"I . . ." Harry looked at Lord Peter in confusion. "HUH?"

"Yes, my lady." Lord Peter looked at Harry with an apologetic nod. "He does indeed carry such a piece, but we had waited to tell him of it until he was free to decide for himself what he wished to do about it. As you know, it will be quite dangerous to remove it."

The Keeper nodded. "Yes, normally it would be so, but there are ways it can be done with far less danger." Concern colored her voice as she continued. "Wizards have all but forgotten the ritual of Renunciation, it is much more all-encompassing than the simple Disowning Ritual used by them today."

She paused briefly, as if contemplating, then continued, "I saw the memory given of the ritual used to bring the Evil One back. He was a fool to use it! Bone of the father, flesh of the servant, blood of the enemy...the absolute fool!" She huffed in scorn.

"Do you realize the bone he used was a muggle's? Where is the magic in a muggle?" she snorted in disgust. "Do you realize the wizard who gave his flesh was not the servant spoken of in the old Magick? The servant required of this ritual is a house elf, for they are magic. They have no core like a wizard, in order to create a core

in a resurrected wizard, the magic must come from a being of magic."

A sharp gasp of intake air echoed as Harry stiffened in dawning realization of what she was saying.

"And as for your blood, when he used it in his fouled ritual, he in effect committed the worst offense against the old Magick," she snorted in disgust. "Line theft, and against the head of Ancient and Noble houses, no less! I tell you now, the old Magick is not pleased."

Harry's face paled as he started to tremble. The flickering flames that dotted the room flared wildly around them. Lord Peter placed a hand on the lad's shoulder to calm him.

"You, Harry James Potter," she spoke with authority, "must now reclaim the family magics he stole from you."

She stood, lowering her hood. Her aged goblin face made harsh by the flickering torch light. "This would include the line of Slytherin. A line granted you by Magick itself through the Right of Conquest, for you have indeed defeated him several times."

Her sightless eyes held them in thrall as she pointed a bony finger at Harry and demanded, "Claim the Magick and the ring of the Slytherin! Take your place as the last of that magical line. You are not the blood heir, but his magical heir by Right of Conquest! You are the last of that line and all Slytherin magic, past, present, and future, is yours to keep, to use, to bequeath, to deny, and to undo – as you see fit."

The silence was total until Ragnok's deep, booming laughter filled the room.

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To the homophobic reviewer that sent the flame, let us repeat: This story has no pairings. This story is not slash! Get over yourself!

Frau and I know this story isn't for everyone. We write because we enjoy writing. We don't beg for reviews, but we truly appreciate them.

Yes, the scene between Harry and Sirius was OOC for our story but we felt it needed to be added. Harry still is insecure enough to want to make sure that Sirius would still be in his life. Just not in control. Harry has had enough of controlling adults but he still needs family.

So no worries about Harry spilling everything to Sirius and Remus. They are not the main focus to this story.

Until Next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 26: Due Notice

Albus sat alone in his office at Hogwarts, staring at his cup of tea. Where had he gone so wrong? In front of him was a copy of Harry's files and brief for the meeting that had happened early that day.

It was all there in front of him. Every bit of information that he had somehow missed. He was supposed to uphold the laws he had helped create in the Wizarding World, instead he was now the victim of those very same laws.

He never dreamed that forcing Harry to do the tournament he was basically saying: "Yes, Harry, you are old enough to know what's going on, old enough to make your own decisions. By competing, you, my boy, are an adult."

Then Cornelius' ploy at trying to discredit Harry in that trial, trying in him front of the full Wizengamot as an adult. What was Cornelius thinking!

Albus had been suspicious that Harry was up to something, he just couldn't figure out what. The boy never received any mail as that owl of his was too noticeable. How did the boy do it?

The wards really needed to be fine-tuned, but since Harry now refused go back to his relatives, he had to could not clear the school. His only option was to force Harry to remain at Hogwarts.

It wasn't safe for the boy outside of the school and Sirius Black wasn't responsible enough to keep a 15 year old boy in check. Merlin, Sirius had never grown up himself, what with his stint in Azkaban. How could he be a proper guardian for a teenager when he needed a guardian himself?

No, Harry was now lost to him. He would never regain the trust the lad once had in him. Or had he ever had it? Included in the file was a mind healers report. Severus had a lot to answer for. How could he have missed this? How did Harry submit to a healer? He never left the school, that Albus knew of.

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Later that afternoon, Minerva and Poppy were sitting in the infirmary office sharing their usual afternoon tea. So far the conversation had focused on the events leading up to Harry's emancipation.

"Poppy?" Minerva queried as her old friend refreshed their cups, "Have you noticed anything unusual about Albus of late?"

"If you mean other than his normal meddling?"

"No, no," Minerva replied. "I was referring to his rather frightening obsession with Harry Potter." She sighed. "I know he has always taken an unusually strong interest in young Harry's life. I'm afraid the stress of being on constant watch for so many years is. . .well. . ."

She stirred her tea slowly, lost in thought for a bit.

Poppy, watched her friend as she sipped from her own cup.

"Are you asking me if Albus is losing his ability to make rational decisions, Min?"

There was a pause as Minerva collected her thoughts. "Yes, Poppy, I am. Lately he has become more and more adamant that he have total control over Mr. Potter's life." Minerva hesitated and then continued. "He has gone so far as to tell me that the wards will not be re-tuned because Mr. Potter MUST stay at Hogwarts if he is not going to be at his relatives. He used the argument that staying with Sirius was too dangerous. This even after Harry won his emancipation. Albus is at this moment holed up in his office looking for a way to regain control of the boy."

Minerva looked up at her old friend, tears shining in her eyes. "I'm afraid, Poppy, afraid his mind is buckling with the strain and there is nothing I can do to help him."

Poppy leaned forward, placing a hand on her old friends' arm. "Don't fret Min, I'll see to it he comes in for a mandatory physical this week. While he's in here I'll be sure to check for stress and mental acumen as well."

Minerva gave her a watery smile. "Thank you Poppy. I'll be sending you the necessary paperwork so you can release your results if you find anything amiss."

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A weary Harry returned to Grimmauld Place after his meeting with the Goblin Keeper. The Keeper had informed them the best time to do the ritual would be during the dark of the moon after the new year.

Harry and Sirius, after due consideration, decided to have their Christmas fun in spite of Dumbledore. They made hurried plans for fun, sun and half-naked girls on some white sand beach.

The bags were quickly packed and ready. Harry no longer needed anyone's permission, but he did let Lord Peter and Ragnok know where he would be, in case of an emergency. Their port-key was timed, and just as it activated to whisk them away, the fireplace in the parlour went green.

"Sirius? Hello? Harry? Anyone?" called Remus. "You need to get to Hogwarts for an emergency Order meeting. Hello?"

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Rita Skeeter was in seventh heaven. She had followed Harry Potter to a meeting where he was emancipated! And the files she'd managed get a quick look at . . . !

She had the story of a life time. Child Abuse, neglect, recognized as an adult by a senile Albus Dumbledore and a bumbling Cornelius Fudge! It was the stuff of dreams! And that fool Dumbledore never suspected he carried his undoing in his very own pocket! His magic had masked her presence quite well.

She quickly wrote out her article. The minister was at first reluctant to print anything that portrayed him in a bad light. However, when she pointed out that he had believed Dumbledore when he said the boy was fine at his relatives, and the fact that headmaster had also stepped aside and let him try the boy – thereby giving his implied consent to the trial.

A reluctant Cornelius had turned a lovely shade of green at reading her piece, but gave the go ahead. Anything to bring Potter down a notch now that he claimed not one but two lordships.

The next morning, she went to the Editor's Office and knocked. She handed in her article and left, humming to herself.

Later that day, she got word from her contact in the ministry that he needed to speak with her.

In Hogsmeade, in a corner table at the Hogshead, Rita met her contact, a fat little filing clerk in the DMLE that was disgruntled with how things were done.

"You need to run Rita," the clerk said. "The Potter's high class barrister has filed paperwork for your arrest. Seems you violated the terms of your employment."

"He can't do that!" Rita hissed.

"Yes he can. Potter owns controlling shares of the Daily Prophet and he has requested that all articles about him go through his barrister before printing. How you got into a closed meeting at Gringotts is beyond me, but I'm sure the Goblins would like to know as well."

"But. . . but I have the Minister's backing!" Rita argued.

"Ol' Fudge doesn't have any say. You violated your contract Rita and ol' Charley is looking for ways to fire you. Best you lay low for a time. Heard Potter took off for the hols with that insane godfather of his, so he won't be around for you to snoop on."

Rita shuddered as she paid her spy and left. This put a new wrinkle in her plans, she mused. The best way to to hide would be in her bug form, but where? As a beetle, she knew that the whole world was against her, between the many predators that ate beetles to the many humans that don't watch where they are stepping.

She smiled. There was one place she could hide and still get a scoop.

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Lord Charles sat in a very cluttered office, looking over at his friend. "Care for a drink while you are here, Peter?"

"Don't mind if I do, Charles," smiled the barrister as he made himself comfortable. "She's a nasty bit of magic isn't she? How in Merlin's name did she get on the paper?"

"She blackmailed her way in originally and then I couldn't get rid of her, as she had the ear, so to speak, of our illustrious Minister." Charles coughed the innuendo into one hand as he handed Peter a shot of fire-whiskey with the other. "Anyway, she had a binding contract, one I could not break."

"I see," Lord Peter smirked, taking the glass with one hand while pulling out a folded piece of parchment with the other. "Thank you for alerting me about her. Here, this is what Lord Harry and I worked out on what should be published about his recent elevation to adulthood."

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Harry was coming in from the beach when Dobby popped in. "I'se sorry, Master Harry Sir, I'se got an urgent letter for you from your your Lord Petey. He says it's about What'ses His Name. Ol' Dumbly's trying to get hold of you'se Master Harry Sir. Here is your copy of the Daily and Quibbly."

Harry sighed and took the letter and package. "Thanks Dobby."

Harry James Potter Emancipated!
by Emmy Anderson

Yesterday in a close session at Gringotts, Harry James Potter meet with Gretta Marchbanks, Head of the Wizarding Children Services and with Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Law Enforcement (standing in stead of minister Fudge to avoid a conflict of interest). Representing Mr. Potter was his barrister, Lord Peter Flinchley-Addams Retainer at Law. Also attending, but uninvited, was headmaster Albus Dumbledore, protesting this action.

The meeting lasted only an hour before Harry James Potter became emancipated. His title is now, Lord Harry James Potter-Gryffindor, Lord of the Ancient and Noble Houses of Potter and Gryffindor.

Lord Potter-Gryffindor has issued a written statement that the emancipation came about due to the actions of Albus Dumbledore,

Headmaster of Hogwarts and Head of the Wizengamot, and Cornelius Fudge, Minister of Magic. They declared Lord Potter-Gryffindor an adult through their actions this past year.

Lord Potter-Gryffindor stated that by forcing him to participate in the Tri-wizard tournament and by trying him as an adult before the Wizengamot, both bodies of government set a new precedent and thereby declared him an adult by default.

What Lord Potter-Gryffindor has planned for the future is unclear at this time. He wishes to finish his schooling in peace before making any further decisions.

We, at the Daily Prophet, wishes him well.

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The Order of the Phoenix was in turmoil. No one could find Harry or Sirius anywhere.

When asked, Remus shrugged and replied, "Sirius'd been planning on taking Harry away for Christmas after all. They left a note and were gone before I arrived."

"But. . . It isn't safe!" Molly screeched, throwing up her hands. "Albus! How could you allow this to happen! You promised that Harry would be safe here at Hogwarts or we would've demanded he come to the Burrow."

"Now, now, Molly," Albus said calmly. "I'm sure once I have a talk with the boy, he will only see that we have his best interest at heart."

Remus snorted. "Pull the other one, Albus! Harry's a lot like his father in stubbornness, but he's also his mother's son and has her temper."

Molly started to screech again until someone put a silencing spell on her. Arthur thought about removing it and chiding whoever performed it, but decided instead to be thankful for the small miracle of silence.

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In the deep recesses of the Ministry, Croaker was going over the file on the latest reports of Lord Harry James Potter.

"So, the boy finally managed to get out from under ol' Albus' control," he chuckled as he read Sparkplug's report. "And Molly was heard in all her glory at Gringotts. So by morning everyone else will know as well."

"Boss, a letter from Twist has arrived."

"What does the lad have to say?"

Dear Unspeakables,

I want to thank you for your help these past few months in supplying me with all the stats for my articles. I am wondering though, is the Queen really going to get involved with the Wizarding World?

I heard from the grapevine that Fudge is still in the dark looking for my head. I guess I shouldn't be surprised. He always did have his head up his arse.

What I am surprised about is that no one has figured out who I really am. Even Rita, in her illegal animagus disguise, hasn't found me. Oh? Didn't know that did you? How I found out? I have my own sources.

Potter has been very helpful in giving me detailed information as well. Seems no one really understands just how disgruntled our golden boy really is. He's been writing me notes since I first started my articles.

As for your offer of joining, I think I'll pass for the moment. I refuse to go near the ministry while it is still head-hunting, my head, to be honest.

Well I have to go. I am enjoying my Christmas Hols tremendously.

Oliver

Croaker laughed. How ingenious this lad really is. I wonder how long it'll take for the rest my people to figure it out?

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In Little Hangleton, a scream of rage echoed off the stone walls as many dark cloaked figures stepped back in fear.

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Rita found the prefect place to hide – Potter's trunk which he left behind for the holiday. As she tried to wiggle her way into the trunk, eager to delve into the brat's secrets, a glass jar slammed down over her. She was caught! Buzzing her wings frantically, she tried desperately to escape, only to have a lid clapped firmly down, trapping her.

As she peered out of the jar, she saw a distorted image of a house elf wearing what looked like a safari hat and khaki commando shirt and shorts.

"Bad buggy! Dobby caught you'se! Master Harry Sir will be sooooo pleased! Maybe he'll let Dobby keep you'se for a pet!"

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Well, we did manage to sneak Oliver into this chapter briefly. We haven't forgotten him.

As for the concerns about the port-key situation, please remember that it was a goblin made port-key. Also remember that goblin and house elf magic does not affect the wards around Hogwarts, according to canon as we understand it.

We wish to thank everyone that has reviewed. We really do appreciate them, even those that ignore the disclaimer. We try to reply privately if you give us a way to do so.

Until next time. – GF and the Frau

Chapter 27: Holiday Madness

Black Island was an unplottable island near Port Royal. Its white sandy beach and clear blue waters were like a little bit of paradise. The only building on the island was a Victorian Summer manor house with long verandas wrapping it.

However, it was the beach of a nearby wizarding resort island that proved to be everything Sirius promised it would be. The older wizard had wished he had remembered to pack a camera.

The day after they arrived on Black Island, Remus port-keyed in. To say the werewolf was furious at being left behind to be the scape goat of the Order's rantings and interrogations would be putting it mildly.

"It couldn't be helped, Moony," Sirius said snickering. "We had to get out of there before Dumble's prison door closed on Harry again. The old man tends to forget that the boy needs some joy in his life."

Remus started to protest more vehemently until Sirius stopped him by pointing down the beach. "Look at Harry and what do you see?"

The teen in question was busy building a castle in the sand. Something he'd always dreamed of doing as a child. He was planning on being a care-free kid for the whole week.

"When was the last time you've seen him that relaxed and happy, if ever?" Sirius asked. "He knows he's safe here, Moony. Only I, as head of the Black family, can give access to this island. He can now finally be himself, and be the kid he was never allowed to be."

The two marauders soon settled in matching chairs as they watched Harry play in the sand and surf while they sipped drinks in the shade of the veranda.

"Moony," Sirius paused for a moment. "Let me tell you what I found out in the meeting at Gringotts. You weren't there for most of it. . . ." Sirius stared out at the lowering sun as he spoke in great detail of what he'd learned.

"So you see," he finished, "we failed them all, James, Lily and Harry. I don't think they'll ever forgive us."

For the remainder of the week, the three of them spent their time island hopping between Black Island and the nearby Wizarding Resort Beach and night club. After all, according to Sirius, Harry needed to have his horizons broadened, so to speak.

Both men were now convinced it was in Harry's best interest to have nothing to do with Dumble's Order, as it wasn't what it had been when they first joined.

During the first war, Albus had been far more open to the opinions of the members and they had actively stood against Voldemort. Now, it was a dictatorship, and most importantly, Albus was taking more interest in Harry's life than the war itself. Such interest was very unhealthy. The man had too many damn secrets and wasn't about to share them. Not good when people's lives might stand or fall on the knowledge he was hoarding.

"I should've never listened to Albus, Moony. He's cost me more than anyone could ever know," Sirius said sadly, one night as they had checked on a sleeping Harry.

"You trusted him. We all did," Remus said, joining him on the patio with a couple of drinks. "I never visited Harry once, in all the time he was growing up, because Albus said it wasn't safe and with my furry problem. . ."

Sirius sighed. "We both failed them. We both promised to be there for Harry and we weren't. We promised! And its a wonder we still have our magic the way we let them down."

"We failed because we put our trust in the wrong person, Padfoot. He made sure we looked to him for everything. The muggles would say he brainwashed us, from the time we were kids and looking back on it, they'd be right. We all trusted Albus blindly. What does Harry say about all this?"

Sirius gulped down his drink before replying. "Harry wants us in his life, but he won't allow anyone, including us, to control him the way Albus has. Anymore, the decisions to be made are his alone to make. We had our chance and we stuffed it." Remus watched his old friend as he brushed away a tear. "All we can give him now is our love."

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Cornelius Fudge wadded up his copy of the Prophet and threw it at his aide, Percy Weasley, a.k.a Weatherby, and snarled. "Where's that blasted Skeeter woman! She was suppose to stop Potter from getting any political clout!"

Percy Weasley ducked. "I. . . I'm sorry sir, but she hasn't reported for work for two days. The DMLE has a warrant for her arrest for invasion of privacy and she's wanted by the goblins for questioning. I would imagine she's laying low for the time being."

"Find her!" Fudge snapped, slamming his fist on his desk. "And contact Lucius. We need a plan for when Potter tries to claim his seats on the Wizengamot."

"Yes sir," Percy hurried out the door before hesitating briefly and called over his shoulder, "Don't forget you have a meeting with the muggle Prime Minister at one." Percy shut the door just as a spell slammed into it.

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Hermione returned home with mixed feelings. She had told her parents about the fall out between her and Harry, and about her limited career choices in the Wizarding World. To say they were unhappy with the situation was a gross misstatement.

"You mean to tell us, that all you are good for in that. . . that world is to bear children!" her father demanded. "We allowed you to go after we spoke with that professor. She told us that you would be a very promising witch, with a bright career ahead of you! You could've gone to the finest schools in Britain for what we're paying!"

Hermione hung her head. There really wasn't anything she could say to that. She'd probably snuffed up all her chances at getting a placement in a good uni, since she hadn't taken any muggle classes while attending Hogwarts.

That night as Hermione was settling into bed with a good book, her mother entered.

"Hermione, sweetie, we need to talk."

"What about Mum?" Hermione asked, setting her book aside while cringing inwardly. She'd been dreading this discussion.

"About your letters," her mother started in as she sat at the foot of her daughter's bed. "Something's changed, hasn't it?"

"What do you mean, Mum?" Hermione asked nervously.

"Oh sweetie, your letters used to contain such tales about this boy - Harry," her mother explained. "And now, he's almost disappeared from them. In fact, your letters are all about your school work with very little about your social life."

Hermione huffed. "What social life? Only Harry and Ron spoke to me. The girls in my dorm barely tolerate me."

Her mother sighed. "Hermione, sweetie, do you remember we had this talk when you were in primary school?"

"The one about if you want friends, you must first be a friend?" Hermione sniped.

"That's the one. I was so happy that you made friends at Hogwarts. I was a bit concerned that they were boys, but still. . . what happened?"

Hermione sighed. "Harry is upset that I didn't write to him over the summer. He's barely spoken to me all term. He's just shut me out."

"Did you promise to write to him?"

"Yes but. . . it wasn't safe. I couldn't. . ."

"So you broke a promise to your friend? Is this the same one whose friend died?"

"Yes, but. . . Professor Dumbledore told us not to! He said it was for Harry's own good!"

Her mother sighed. "Hermione, I know we taught you to respect adults, but we also taught you that adults are not always right. Respect is one thing, sweetie, blind trust is another."

Taking a deep breath, her mother paused before continuing. "Tell me, sweetie, if Harry'd promised to write to you after you lost a friend, would he keep that promise? No matter what someone else told him? Would he find a way to be there for you in your grief? You made a promise and went back on it. Now it's cost you a very important friendship."

Hermione hung her head in shame. How often had Harry broken the rules for her? She sniffled, "But mum. . . Professor . . ."

Her mother held up her hand. "Hermione. You said in your letters that Harry was supposedly safest at his relatives' house. However, you also said, in your letters, that you suspect Harry's living conditions with them weren't the greatest. In fact, a few of your letters hinted that he was abused by these same relatives. Am I correct?"

Hermione nodded sadly.

"You had a choice, whether to be there for a grieving friend or obey a professor who had no right to deny a student simple communication outside of school. You could've found a way to keep in touch with him.

"As far as the Headmaster keeping information from the boy when it directly impacts his life, well, I'm not saying that your professor was right in keeping him in the dark. I only know what you told us, but even we can read between the lines, sweetie."

Hermione sighed, looking at her hands. Harry had been trying to tell her all term that the headmaster wasn't always right, especially when it came to him. "You are right, Mum, but it doesn't matter. You and Da are going to pull me out of Hogwarts, aren't you?"

"Your father and I are still deciding if we will allow you to return to Hogwarts after the holidays. I suggest that you take some time to think about what you want to happen."

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Minerva was sitting at her desk going over the first term exams before heading over to her sister's home for the hols. She had this last bit of work to do.

A knock on the door and Poppy entered. "Minerva. I have Albus' test results. He wasn't happy about taking them. However. . . after I threatened to go to the Board he complied. As Deputy Headmistress, it is your right to have a copy. He wasn't happy that you and the Board would be receiving copies but still . . ." Poppy huffed. "I'll leave you to your reading. Sorry to spoil your holidays. I know you were looking forward to spending time away with your family."

Minerva sighed as she reached for the file.

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Sirius and Remus walked into the manor house on Black Island after spending the day appreciating the many shapes and forms of the half-naked female bodies that littered the resort's beach. Harry had returned earlier as he had some mail from Lord Peter.

The two old marauders could heard Harry's laughter ringing out.

"What's up Harry?" Sirius called with a lop-sided grin.

Harry cackled at the two while pointing and placing a hand on Dobby's shoulder. The house elf was holding up a lidded glass jar with a very strange looking beetle in it.

"Dobby caughts the bad buggly!" The elf was dressed in his safari gear. "Harry Potter sir is letting Dobby keeps her as a pet!" he said, holding the jar higher for them to see his prize. The bug was trying frantically to escape by scratching at the jar's lid. "Dobby promises to take care of buggly, I'se feed her and love her, and calls her Buggy! Dobby will!"

Harry lost it totally, dropping to the floor in hysterical laughter as the two men looked at each other in confusion. Trying between gasps of breath, Harry pointed at the jar and managed to get out, "It . . . It's . . . Rita!"

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So many people wanted the Dobby scene so we just could not resist adding it. We are still cackling about this whole chapter.

The important announcement is this was suppose to have been the last chapter that I had written during NaNoWrMo but Frau, being the twisted old woman that she is, decided to rewrite the plot. So the chapter that was originally written no longer fits and had to be discarded. This means that the schedule chapters are totally reworked. I have no clue how many chapters are left at this point. Let's hear a round of awww's from everyone.

Thanks for the reviews. Until next time. -GF and the Frau

Chapter 28: All Good Things Must Come to An End

It was three tired, sun-kissed males that port-keyed back to Grimmauld Place two days before the start of the school term. Harry smiled tiredly up at his two godfathers before heading towards his bedroom.

"We did good, Mooney," Sirius said as he staggered towards his bed.

The next day found Harry, Sirius and Remus back at Gringotts. The meeting didn't take long, Harry simply had to go over some business with Lord Peter and Ragnok.

Sirius sat in and listened, but made no comment. He didn't try to run interference or influence Harry in his decisions. The older wizard had come to accept, during their vacation, that he made a better uncle than guardian. Bloody hell, even Remus made a better guardian than him!

The ritual was scheduled to be performed at the dark of the moon which was due in five nights. Harry had mixed feelings about doing the ritual itself.

Of course, he wanted that connection with Riddle to be severed, and most of all, to be out from under everyone's control. It was the possible cost that was worrying him.

'Get a grip, Potter,' he thought. 'you've already paid enough in sweat and blood. And it's a fine time to worry about that now!'

The day that all the students returned to Hogwarts, the Daily Prophet's headline once more brought chaos.

Cornelius Fudge Ousted as Minister of Magic!
by Emilia Anderson

In a vote of no confidence, called for by the British Muggle Prime Minister, Cornelius Fudge was ousted today as Minister of Magic. Right after the vote, the former minister was arrested on several counts of fraud, embezzlement and bribery, and on six counts of breaking existing treaties between the Wizengamot and Muggle Parliament.

Amelia Bones was appointed acting minister until a new minister is elected.

See page 2: The muggle British Prime Minister to address the Wizengamot next month.

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Albus Dumbledore sat at his desk. A notice that he was to appear at the next school board meeting had him worried. He was surprised that the board hadn't been more demanding following Oliver Twist's articles. No one still had managed to find a clue on just who this person was. Several of the muggle-borns snickered over the name, but refused to comment on it. It seemed they found the ignorance of their pureblood counter-parts amusing.

He was also concerned about Minerva. His deputy had been avoiding him for most of the Christmas hols. She was up to something, he just didn't know what.

Well, he'd just have to plan for the worst and hope for the best, for now.

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Harry sat in a compartment with Luna as the Hogwarts Express barreled its way back to the school. Ron was off somewhere, doing whatever it was that prefects do, and Harry had yet to see Hermione. He hadn't heard from her all holiday. Oh well, nothing new there. Ginny was also gone, it was rumored that she was going out with Dean.

Harry was thankful he had managed to get onto the train without dealing with Mrs. Weasley. That woman was still trying to get custody of him and refused to accept the fact that Harry was now emancipated and could think for himself.

"Hello Harry," came the dreamy voice of Luna, breaking into his thoughts. "Did the nargles give you a nice Christmas? I see that you have been busy playing with the water sprites."

Harry laughed.

"Daddy is waiting for another article, Harry. He's quite vexed that you took the hols off."

Harry blinked, bolting straight up in his seat.

Luna lowered her copy of the Quibbler that she had been reading upside down and looked at him. "When I asked Daddy when you would start writing again, he sputtered for a bit. Do you want Daddy and me to take an oath?"

Harry sputtered and shook his head. "No Luna. I trust you, but could you not mention it in front of people?"

She smiled as the door opened.

"Harry!" Hermione exclaimed. "You just would not believe it!"

"Believe what, Hermione?"

"I took my parents to Gringotts to do the inheritance test like Twist told us to. Guess what!"

"You are a founder's heir?"

"The Wartspuddles made a nest your hair?"

"What! NO!" Hermione sputtered as she hugged her friend. "I am related to Hector Dagworth-Granger on my dad's side! He was the founder of the 'Most Extraordinary Society of Potioneers.' Seems his brother was a squib, it was all hushed up, even Dad didn't know about it. I've got a vault and everything!"

Harry smiled. "So this means you are a half-blood and not a muggle-born, right?"

Hermione gushed. "My parents agreed to allow me to continue with my schooling as long as I start taking muggle tutorials during the summer. My new vault will pay for most of it."

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The first week back to Hogwarts flew by fast. Harry found himself under a lot of scrutiny making it almost impossible to get away. He

did arrange with Professor McGonagall to be out of the castle when it came time for the ritual. He mentioned that an emergency meeting between his advisers and Sirius was necessary. She never suspected a thing.

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Harry found himself once more within the bowels of Gringotts. The room he now stood was the same room he first met the Keeper in. She was here again, seated on her raised chair. Harry walked forward, bowed and stood before her, waiting patiently. She smiled at him and nodded.

"Greetings Lady. When you said the Slytherin magic would be mine to keep, to use, bequeath, deny, or undo. . . what exactly did you mean?" Harry queried with a puzzled frown.

"I meant, child that, if accepted by the Slytherin signet, you will be the master of Slytherin family magic. You will be the one to decide if the spells the Dark One has cast hold or fail. You will decide whether to recall the magic he stole from you. This would mean that any of his spells, like the one that seals the piece of his soul to you, would be undone. This would then free you of his taint, and any other beings, places, or items he has done the same to as well."

"Any others?" Lord Peter asked in a shocked whisper.

"Yes." Her soft, sibilant voice answered. "I believe that the one who calls himself Voldemort has created more soul repositories. This is why his spirit was able to remain on this plane of existence even though the boy killed his body long ago."

The wizards that stood in front of her shuddered at her words.

"Then, if I claim this ring and the magic of Slytherin and speak the Ritual. . ." Harry started to say.

"Yes, child. You will put an end to his power, once and for all.

"Let's do it then," Harry said, straightening his shoulders. The look of determination that schooled his youthful features was impressive.

"There will be immense pain when the soul piece is released, and great danger when you call for Judgment," she warned.

"Can't be any worse than the cruciatus, or the twice be-damned visions and if this will save lives it's worth the bloody price," Harry muttered, then blushed. "Forgive my tongue, such words aren't meant to be spoken in front of a Lady."

The ancient figure before him smiled. "These are the words you need to speak, child. I, Lord Harry James Potter-Gryffindor do hereby claim, by Right of Conquest, the ring and Magic of the Ancient and Noble House of Slytherin. Mine by right, to keep, to use, to bequeath, to deny and to undo – as the Magical Head of the line. You must then claim the ring as you did those of Potter and Gryffindor. Place it upon your finger and if it accepts you, continue –"

Harry nodded, and suiting action to her command, placed the ring on his finger and repeated her words. There was a brief glow as his claim was accepted. He then turned to the ancient female Goblin and spoke the words she gave him.

"I, Harry James Potter, Lord of Potter, Gryffindor and Slytherin, do call upon the Magicks I wield as the Head of these Ancient and Noble Houses – to disown, disavow and call for the renunciation of Tom Marvolo Riddle, the Dark Lord known as Lord Voldemort.

"I accuse him, before the Old Magick, of Line theft against the Head of the House he wrongfully claims, and also the Houses of Potter and Gryffindor. Three he has wronged through the theft of my blood.

"Further I call upon Magick to strip him of any and all magics from these lines that were gained unlawfully when my blood was taken unwilling, and to undo all magics, be they spells, wards or creations, made with the Potter, Slytherin, or Gryffindor magics and to return them all to me, their rightful wielder."

A swirling wall of magic was building around Harry and the Keeper. Within its depths gold, silver and green combined, shimmering into an almost solid essence around them. Faintly through it the observers could see Harry's body trembling, as he struggled to continue.

"Tom Marvolo Riddle, false claimant to the title of Lord Slytherin, Lord Voldemort, you are hereby disowned. You have no name. You are hereby renounced, you have no family, no Kin Right. You are stripped of all Potter, Gryffindor, and Slytherin magic by my word and will."

Harry gasped, staggering as a wall of pain and magic slammed into him with a force that almost knocked him off his feet. Somewhere, within his mind, he could hear unearthly screams as magic was uprooted and ripped away.

Taking a deep breath he continued in a shaking voice, clutching the arm of the Keeper's chair desperately for support. "As is my right, I call upon the Old Magick to stand Judgment, and if my cause is Just, I ask that all the nameless one has created through the magics he once wielded be un-made! So Mote It Be!"

With his last words Harry screamed as the scar on his forehead burst open. Blood and black ichor ran down his face as he crumpled to the floor, unconscious.

"Harry!" Sirius and Lord Peter shouted, stepping toward the boy.

"No, leave him!" Ragnok caught their arms, holding them back. They watched as The Keeper of Wisdom rose from her seat and knelt beside Harry's unmoving form.

She leaned over the him, one hand reaching to brush the hair from his face in a gentle caress. "He will be well soon." She murmured softly. "He fought the pain well and is a true warrior. His cause was deemed Just and Magick answered his call."

She looked up then, raking Ragnok and the two wizards with her strange white eyes. "There are few who could call upon the Judgment of The Old Magick and be answered. . .and fewer still who could pass it's Judgment and live to tell of it."

Sirius' face turned pale. "Is he, will he live?" he gasped.

"He will be fine. When his wound bleeds cleanly, he may be healed. If it is done properly, there will be no scar. The foul darkness that flows from the wound now is all that remains of the soul piece he carried. It is no more."

She nodded at them and slipped regally out the door. Her guard formed up and closed ranks about her as they left. The sound of marching goblin feet faded away down the hall.

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In Little Hangleton, an unearthly scream of torturous pain erupted in the inky dark silence that surrounded an old rundown manor house.

Inside a man, if you could call him a man, was writhing in agony on a throne-like chair. Several prominent members of the Wizarding World stood by helplessly, unable to give any aid to their lord and master due to the sudden draining weakness of their own bodies..

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Frau and I repeatedly will state – There will be NO pairings in this story. It was never our intention to alienate Harry from his friends, it's just how this story turned out. As for the blow up everyone expected from Hermione, somehow it got deleted. Frau and I don't know what happened to it.

We will be wrapping up all the loose ends as this story is winding down. Don't worry you will be hearing from Oliver soon.

Until next time. – GF and the Frau

Chapter 29: Well, I'm back. Miss me?

The first Monday morning after the new year, Vernon Dursley felt like his heart would stop. The auditors had been busy for the last several weeks and now the results were due. All management personnel were required to present themselves in the board room today to hear the auditors findings.

He'd seriously considered packing his clothing and leaving town Friday night, but a quick glance at their savings account balance had convinced him that was not a good option. He couldn't even blame the freak for this mess. The boy had himself emancipated. No, he was on his own. Damn the freak!

"How the hell did they figure it out? The scheme was foolproof Parker said!" Vernon fumbled for the keys to his new car, praying as he did so that Parker was right.

The office was eerily quiet as he entered. Sweat dampened his shirt despite the cold that blew in with him. Was it an omen? He shuddered and plastered a ghastly smile on his pasty face. "Morning Eliza. Cold out there today." He greeted the receptionist with false cheer as he strode quickly past her towards the boardroom beyond. "Everybody here today?"

"Yes Mr. Dursley. They're waiting on you." He watched as her hand pressed a button on her intercom and her head dipped as she spoke quietly into the machine.

"Ah, finally. Take a seat Dursley." Mr. Grunning, himself, sat at the head of the table.

Vernon nodded briefly and took the only empty chair available, next to Parker.

"I shall begin then," said a thin, balding man as he stood and began his report. "After a complete audit of all management personnel my company has found only two major discrepancies." He paused to take a sip of water.

Vernon became conscious of the squirming man next to him. 'Damn, Parker, sit still and stay cool. Your nerves will hang us yet!'

"The majority of departments show some slight mishandling of funds, mostly due to clerical and mathematical errors. These have been pointed out and corrected. Those responsible have been taught the proper procedures to assure accuracy in the future. . ."

The auditor's droning voice seemed to go on forever. Vernon sat in a haze as sweat soaked his underarms and trickled down his back. 'Dear God, is this what it's like waiting for the axe to fall?' He wondered as he fought for control of himself.

Then, suddenly there was a deafening silence and his heart stuttered as a grating order from Mr. Grunnings startled him to awareness.

"Thank you, all of you except Dursley and Parker may return to work."

The door shut quietly as the last person left. "Tell me Vernon, did you think you were underpaid? Did you, Parker? Couldn't the two of you wait for honest promotions? Or perhaps it was the thrill of it all?"

Vernon's hope died as the door opened again and four uniformed officers entered.

"Take them away, I cannot abide thieves! Oh, and I should probably warn you two, neither does the Office of Inland Revenue!"

Vernon only distantly felt the cuffs click home on his wrists. Everything was a blur as he was walked down the hall and out the front door by two of the officers. His mind never registered it as he was placed in the back of a cruiser and taken away. His life, his comfortable life, was over.

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"Are you Mrs. Petunia Dursley?" A uniformed officer asked her when she answered the insistent knocking on her front door.

"Yes, I am . . . Oh no! Has something happened to my Dudders?" She screeched in dismay. "Why are you here?"

"No Mum. I have no idea who this 'Dudders' is. I'm hear about your husband. . ." the officer started to explain, only to be interrupted again.

"A car crash? Heart attack, what?"

"No Mum, he's been arrested," the officer tried to explain once more. "I'm here to collect all bank statements, savings account information and all personal effects pertaining to his work and finances."

"Wha. . .?"

His reply left her speechless. "I have a Magistrates order to that effect," he continued, handing her an official looking paper, "I'd appreciate it if you'd step aside so I can finish this as quickly as possible?" A numb and shaken Petunia stepped back to let him enter.

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Hermione watched as Harry left for his meeting at Gringotts. She was of two minds about Harry's new independence. On one hand, she was glad he didn't have to return to his dreadful relatives and was free to make his own decisions. On the other, she didn't feel comfortable about him shutting out the adults that cared about his safety and well-being. She just could not believe that Harry managed to keep this all a secret from her.

Even Ron was pissed that Harry went around behind everyone's back and got emancipated without telling a soul, especially him. He felt he was still Harry's best mate despite their differences. Why keep it a secret? What was Harry trying to hide?

She sighed as her mind drifted back to their conversation on the train after she'd told him about being related to someone in the Wizarding World.

"Not a muggle born? Wow! That's. . .strange." Harry replied to Hermione's enthusiastic news on the train. "I wonder how many others found out similar news?" He frowned in thought. "I guess this means that you can get a better job than you thought, eh?"

Hermione looked at the boy she had called her best friend for almost five years. She recalled all the good times they had spent together. He was her best friend and her blind faith in authority figures had led her to betray his trust. Her mother's words had been like a glass of ice water in the face. It was time she apologized.

"Harry? I . . . I want to tell you how sorry I am that I let the Headmaster control me this past summer." She hung her head briefly, then raised her eyes to his. "I was a fool and, even worse, I broke a promise to my best friend. I wasn't there for you when you needed me the most. Can you ever forgive me?" Her eyes shone bright with the tears she was fighting.

"Hermione, I . . .I'm not," he stuttered.

Her shaking hand on his arm stilled him. "I know it will take time, and I know we may never be," she paused to swallow a sob. "We may never be as close as we were. But, do you think maybe we could try to start again, please? Because I miss you, Harry. Without you I'm alone, and I don't want to be alone anymore." She crumpled against his shoulder as the tears fell.

Harry reached out and circled her shoulders with one arm. "I don't know if I can trust you like before, 'Mione. It hurt so much when you left me lost and alone for the whole summer. I needed you and I don't ever want to feel like that again."

Her muffled sobs shook both of them. "I promise, Harry. I swear I'll never hurt you like that again. I'll even take a witches' oath on my magic!" She managed to choke out.

"No, 'Mione! Don't you see? If I asked for your oath it would mean that I couldn't trust you. We will just have to see if what's broken can be mended — or else we'll have to try to start again." Harry pulled out a clean hanky and offered it to her.

His kind smile drew a watery one from her as she mopped her face. "Hello, my name is Harry Potter, what's yours?"

As the memory ended, she wondered when Harry would be back and if he was ever going to tell her about his business at Gringotts.

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Albus Dumbledore was having his own problems. A school board meeting had been called and he wasn't invited. He had hopes to spend the first week of the new term trying to convince Harry to give up his emancipation and allow him to continue to guide him.

The board was meeting even now on something they simply told him was a matter of utmost importance. Just what had been in that report that Poppy submitted? He felt fine, never better. If it had anything to do with his check-up it just had to be a mistake. That's right a mistake.

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"We bring this meeting to order!" The harsh sound of a gavel striking stone silenced the board members. "A matter of grave concern has been brought to our attention by the Medi-Witch and Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts."

Mutters and whispers broke out once more, and once more the gavel silenced them.

"It would seem that the Deputy Headmistress has noticed some rather disturbing behavior on the part of Headmaster Dumbledore of late. Her report describes an obsessive interest in one particular student. Obsessive to the point that he has put the rest of the students in danger to guarantee the safety of said student. He has also taken it upon himself to try and control all of this student's actions, both at school and at home."

"We always suspected he was barmy, too damn many lemon drops! Get to the gist of it Malfoy!"

"Very well. It is with the strongest recommendation of Madam Pomfrey, Medi-Witch of Hogwarts, that the Headmaster be remanded to St. Mungo's for a full medical and mental examination. She has tentatively suggested he may be suffering from a long term and untreated condition similar to Battle Fatigue and may be suffering from delusions.

"In her own words, 'The Headmaster has been living on a full alert, battle ready status for the last thirty-five years and it has taken its toll on his mind and body. . . ' and she goes on to further request that we

make this examination mandatory, as he will not voluntarily accept it." There was a satisfied glint in Lucius Malfoy's eyes as he finished quoting from the file in his hand.

"Well, I for one, think we should bow to her request. Can't endanger our children. I vote we do as the Medi-Witch suggests, all in favor. . ?" A chorus of 'Ayes' was heard.

"All well and good, now how do we get him there for this check-up?" Augusta Longbottom sniped.

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Harry sighed as he put down his copy of the Quibbler. Let the interrogations begin.

Well, I'm back. Miss me?

To recap one of my earlier articles, I made a trip into Gringotts over the holidays. The goblins are now considering me an asset, as I made 'much profit' for them! Close to a thousand muggle-borns within the British Isles have taken the heritage test and all have passed with interesting results.

Many of them have claimed, by right of blood, idle vaults that had been frozen for years, if not centuries, waiting to be reclaimed. The Goblins are happy that this idle wealth, that had been laying around collecting dust, is once more being put back into circulation and earning the customer and the bank interest again.

Speaking of muggle-borns, I have to say that some of the more archaic pure blood beliefs are now a bit useless. Don't get me wrong, as I said in the past, the government is run on the closed circuit, you do for me and I'll help you, system. . .all tied in to pure blood status and Family Alliances. Now that some of these muggle-borns can trace their blood lines back to many of the ancient and noble houses, things should prove interesting.

I caught the British Prime Minister's speech in front of the Wizengamot the other day. I must say I was impressed. Red and purple look horrid on some people, especially those that are 'called on the carpet,' as the muggles like to say. Who knew our leading wizards could turn so many colours? It took real courage, and a

sharp tongue for the PM to stand before armed wizards and call the leaders of the Wizarding World - "unruly children who could not 'play' well together."

I, for one, was very thankful to hear that spell casting was not only illegal within the Great Meeting Hall but also down right dangerous. At least the Prime Minister was able speak for Her Royal Majesty without being hexed to death by irate representatives.

Lastly, I had a chance to communication with Lord Harry Potter. He contacted me through Gringotts. He has been kind enough to answer a few questions I had for him and generously gave me permission to print the answers so long as I quoted him verbatim.

LP: I really liked your articles, Mr. Twist. They're spot on, and from the checking I've done are brilliant. It's about time somebody stood up against the injustice that runs crazy throughout the Wizarding World. I say good on you, mate, and hope you continue to write the truth. Merlin knows someone has to.

OT: Was it true that you defeated Lord V as an infant?

LP: I will only say that there is always a bit of truth to every myth. The problem is finding that bit of truth.

I'm told that I'm 'The Boy Who Lived.' Odd isn't it, few ever ask me how I did it. All they have ever asked was to see the scar. I don't know, I was a baby when it happened. Yet everybody thought I killed V. I think it was my parents who died protecting me that made it possible for me to live. Does anyone but me think about my parents' sacrifice? No, all they ever see is this ruddy scar.

OT: It is rumored that because you are a parselmouth, you are going dark. Is it true?

LP: If being ridiculed one moment, praised the next, and growing up in the Muggle World doesn't makes me dark, then I doubt being a parselmouth will. I'm just trying to find my place in a world that threw me away and now wants me to be their savior. Fat chance.

OT: What do you see in your future?

LP: As of right now? I'm not sure my place is here, in the Wizarding World. I've never felt that it is my home. I'm dragged out to perform my duties, fight your battles, and when I'm done, you return me to the muggle world like a kid's broken toy. So don't blame me for the state of the Wizarding World. I didn't do it, you did long before I was born. Clean up your own mess.

OT: Thank you Lord Potter.

My brief interview with Lord Potter leaves many unanswered questions. One thing that did come up, Lord Potter has claimed his inheritances and his Wizengamot seats. Perhaps this indicates his willingness to give the Wizarding World a chance. We hope so.

Oliver Twist

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This story is winding down. I think one maybe two chapters left. Frau and I will try to tie up all the loose ends.

We want to thank everyone for their comments, opinions, questions and even flames. It proved to us that Frau and I were on the right track.

Until next time. -GF and The Frau

Chapter 30: On Your Mark

The meeting of the Board ended immediately after their vote.

Augusta Longbottom looked on in puzzlement as a weary looking Lucius Malfoy hurriedly port-keyed out.

She'd thought he would've taken the time to rub their noses in his triumph over Dumbledore's removal as Headmaster. He'd been trying to accomplish it for years now.

'How odd,' she mused. 'How that man bought his way back onto the Board is beyond me.'

Augusta mentally went over the meeting. Now that she thought of it, Malfoy had seemed rather drawn and lackluster, far from his normally abrasive personality. Strange indeed, perhaps this would bear looking into.

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A drained and weak Lucius Malfoy collapsed in the entry to Malfoy Manor. Shocked house elves quickly gathered their downed master and levitated him off to his bed. They then informed the Mistress of the house who quickly summoned the family healer. A note was also sent to Severus Snape requesting his expertise immediately. It would receive no reply.

"Well? What is wrong with him?" Narcissa demanded when the examination was done.

"I'm sorry, Lady Malfoy," the healer said, straightening his robes as he put away his wand. "The only cause for his extreme weakness is a slow and steady drain on his magic. I'm afraid that he will become less than a squib in a matter of hours. We can only hope that his heart is strong enough to handle the loss of his magic."

"What! You can't be serious! My husband is a powerful wizard, what could possibly do this to him?" She screeched.

"I can only tell you that he is the fourth person I have seen in the last day suffering from the same malady. The fact that he still has a magical core at all is a testament to his strength. Knott and Avery

weren't so lucky. They are both Muggles now, and may still die from the draining. Those in attendance to the Master when he collapsed weren't so fortunate. They are now dead."

He hesitated, then turned to face her directly. "It seems to be centered on his dark mark, Lady Malfoy. Since you are not affected, I assume you, like myself, have no Mark?"

She shook her head in reply. "No, it was decided that my appearance in society was more important. The Dark Lord exempted me from bearing it. Draco isn't scheduled to take the Mark until next summer." Narcissa staggered to a nearby chair and dropped into it. "Merlin's ghost, what are we to do now? How is the Dark Lord? Any idea on what caused his collapse?"

"Not at this time. He hasn't regained consciousness. His last words were of the Potter menace."

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Severus Snape sat wearily in his over-sized armchair, rubbing his left arm, clutching a crumpled note. He could feel the Dark Mark on his left arm throbbing with his pulse. This was it. Could Potter have managed to do something fatal to the Dark Lord? It had to be, it was the only explanation.

"Severus?" He glanced over at the fireplace.

"Yes, Minerva?" he asked standing.

"May I come through?"

After he gave his permission, he slumped tiredly back into his chair, "Forgive me, Acting Headmistress but I am a bit indisposed tonight."

"Indisposed, Severus?"

"The Dark Lord is showing his displeasure for some reason. I am not sure why he is doing so, but I find myself incapable of answering his summons. Why are you here, Minerva?"

Minerva sighed as she sat across from him. "Oh Severus. With Albus confined to St. Mungo's for who knows how long, I have been forced to suspend classes for a week until things are more settled."

"It's just as well," Severus said, holding up a bottle of Ogden's Best. "Care for a dram?"

"Severus? Are you alright? You look terrible! Perhaps a dram isn't a good idea at this point. . ."

"Well, it certainly can't hurt!" He snorted in disgust. "To be truthful, it feels like I'm dying Minerva. Like every last bit of energy is being sucked out of me."

The Headmistress' gasp of shock echoed in the room. "I. . . I'd best get Poppy. . ."

"No! If it's what I think, no one can help me." Gathering what strength left to him Severus continued. "I think he's dying, Minerva. He's trying to keep himself alive by sucking the magic out of his followers. I always feared it might come to this."

A knock sounded at the door. Minerva rose shakily to answer it. "Mr. Potter? I'm afraid Professor Snape is unable to see you right now." Her quavering voice shocked Harry.

"What's wrong Professor? Is he hurt? What?"

"Not now Mr. Pott. . . ." She was stunned when the boy in question brushed past her and hurried to the side of his weakening professor.

Severus looked up at the bane of his existence and sucked in a gasp. The boy looked terrible and yet at the same time powerful.

"I just got back from the goblins. The ritual worked," the brat was explaining. "They really wanted to keep me for a couple of days but something told me to return here."

Then Potter plopped onto the sofa next to Minerva. Of all the gall!

"Ritual! What are you going on about Potter!" Severus snarled. He wasn't about to spend the last moments of his life catering to this whelp!

Potter sighed, running a hand through his already messy hair. "The goblins offered, for a price, a ritual to get rid of the horcrux that ol' Tommy boy placed in my scar and to take care of any others he might have made as well. So, once I claimed the Slytherin headship by right of conquest, the Keeper, along with my advisers, informed me that I needed to cast Riddle from the family and strip him of all Potter, Gryffindor and Slytherin family magics. He did, after all, use my blood in that disgusting ritual my fourth year."

Both adults straightened in their seats, eyes widening in stunned awareness.

"So I did. And now, ol' Tommy boy is finding it hard to keep his patchwork body together," Harry said with a shrug. "He's relying on the connections to his followers, sucking away their magic to keep himself alive. They'll either become squibs, or die when their hearts give out."

Severus sucked in a breath, clutching his left arm. So this was it. He'd be sucked as dry of his magic as a vampire drains its victim. The last moments of his life and he had to listen to this brat's prattle!

"Professor?" Potter asked, leaning forward to watch the older man closer. Severus could see the magic rippling around the boy. "Why does Dumbledore trust you so much? Why have you always protected me while I attended Hogwarts and why haven't you asked me if I could remove your Dark Mark?"

Severus scowled. How dare he! The snifter shattered in his hand as his anger powered his waning magic. "GET OUT!"

"Now Severus. . . " Minerva started.

The boy stood, hands on his hips. His green eyes, Lily's eyes, glaring down at him. For a moment, a brief moment, Severus saw Lily standing in front of him ready to give him one of her famous tongue lashings. "Look sir. I can help you, but I need answers to those questions first. You just have to trust me."

"I might say the same to you, Potter!"

Harry sighed, running a hand through his hair. "Fine! Be that way!" He turned to go, throwing up his hands in frustration. "Try to help the man for my mother's sake and what do I get? Well, I tried!"

"Potter! What are you babbling about!"

Harry stopped at the door, placing a hand on the handle. "Answer my questions, sir and I'll tell you."

"Very Slytherin of you, Potter!"

"Yeah, well, I am now the head of family for the Slytherin line, sir."

"Severus, you should tell him," Minerva interjected.

Severus bowed his head. His greasy hair curtained his expression. "I was the one that told the Dark Lord about the prophecy. I had no idea that he would target Lily for it. I went to Albus after . . .after. . . I just wanted to make amends for what I had done. He offered to shield me, protect me if I gave him an unbreakable vow to serve as his spy. Afterwards, I went to Lily's grave and vowed to protect her son as best I could. Because of so many factors, I couldn't openly be seen to help you, Potter. Of course, you didn't make matters easier by prancing around Hogwarts as if you owned the place."

"Well, sir," Potter said, quietly. "I do sort of own the place, now."

Minerva huffed, which the pair ignored.

"As for the Mark, why should I ask you?" he lifted his tired eyes up to the boy. "If Albus couldn't remove it, what makes you think you can?"

"Well, maybe, he's not a parselmouth like I am?" Harry asked as he returned to the room. Severus gazed into the boy's intense green eyes as a unfamiliar feeling started well up in him. A feeling he had smothered, never allowed himself. Hope.

Potter knelt in front of him, holding out a hand. "I can remove the Mark and stop the draining because as I said, sir. I am a parselmouth. More importantly, I now control the Slytherin magic that Riddle used to bind you."

Severus stared into those glowing, green eyes, wishing they were Lily's eyes. He didn't see Lily in those eyes now. The power, the compassion, and determination were all Harry nor did he see James Potter. For the first time since the boy had come to Hogwarts, he was seeing Harry, just Harry.

Between one feeble heart beat and the next, Severus slowly took in what he was feeling and with the last of his fading physical strength, he lifted his arm. Tremors racked his muscles as he slowly offered his trust to Harry.

"Thank you, Professor," Harry said as he pushed up the man's sleeve to expose the ugly, inflamed brand. Severus watched in horror as the boy hissed and poured magic into his arm.

Agony. Sharp and burning. He fought the urge to cry out. Darkness threatened to engulf him. No! He refused to go out like this! He would be damned if he would allow the Dark Lord to win this one!

"Here, Severus drink this," came Poppy's voice as the darkness receded.

Poppy was bending over him, pressing a vial to his lips as he came to in the Infirmary. "That one was a strengthening potion and this is a pain potion."

"How is he, Poppy?" came Minerva's voice from the far side of the bed.

"He'll be fine after some rest," Poppy said. "Honestly, he should've been brought to me when you first found him. Why in Merlin's name you allowed Mr. Potter to remove that disgusting tattoo without me present is beyond me."

"Now Poppy!"

"Don't Poppy me, Minerva McGonagall!" the mediwitch huffed. "First Albus, now Severus and Mr. Potter! What do you think you were playing at!"

"Did someone mention me?" came a tired voice from the next bed.

"You should be asleep, Mr. Potter! The idea of doing a dangerous Goblin Ritual and then performing complex magic so soon after. It's a wonder you can still move!"

Severus started to chuckle. For the first time, since he had taken the Mark, he felt free. Raising his arm, he noted a light gauze wrapped around where the Mark should have been and rubbed a finger over the bandage. A prickly feeling shot up to his shoulder. Gone was the ever present throbbing that radiated from the Mark. Was he totally free?

"But . . . but. . .?" came Potter's voice.

"Sleep young man and I mean it!" came Poppy's voice.

"Alright, you win, but I have to tell the Professor something."

"Make it quick!"

Severus turned his head towards the boy. "What is it Potter?"

"Sir, not only was I able to remove the Mark and snap its connection to your magic, I found a lot of other spells and stuff attached. Some of it had Riddle's magic around it but some, I didn't recognize. Most of them were compulsion and loyalty spells. At least that's what they felt like. I was able to get rid of most of them, but you might want to check with the Goblins. For a fee, they'll take care of what I missed."

Severus took in a breath. Albus. It had to be. "Th. . . thank you, Mr. Potter, I'll. . . .I'll take it under advisement."

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There wasn't a whole lot of humor in this one. We just wanted to show everyone what happened to Snape. We think we've tied up most of the loose ends, but feel one or two are left. We'll see.

Thanks for reviews. We appreciate all of them, the good, the bad, but not the flames.

Until next time -GF and the Frau

Chapter 31: Life Can Be Funny

Harry walked into the Great Hall for dinner. It had been a week since the Goblin ritual and the removal of Snape's dark mark. Today was the first time he'd been allowed to step foot outside the infirmary and it was his studied opinion that Madam Pomphrey should be declared a Dark Witch for the obvious pleasure she took in 'locking down' her helpless patients.

She'd steadfastly refused to allow either Harry, or Professor Snape, out of her infirmary. No matter how determinedly both had sulked, threatened, and whined, she refused to comply. Poppy had a streak of pure evil, Harry was sure of it.

Harry's mental grumbling halted as soon as he walked into the Great hall. There his eyes, not to mention his ears, met with the strangest sight he had ever seen.

Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger were faced off in the center aisle, toe to toe in a shouting match and the professors were sitting back seemingly enjoying the show! Strange, shouldn't someone be putting a stop to this?

". . . furthermore, just because the pure-bloods have always had a monopoly on all high ranking, prestigious positions doesn't mean. . ." screeched Granger, her face red.

"It's tradition, Granger!" Malfoy snarled, interrupting. " But then, what would YOU know about OUR traditions and culture? You are, after all, an outsider, it is OUR world!"

"Your world? I think Her Majesty might disagree! And as for tradition! Shall we talk about tradition?" Hermione arched an eyebrow smugly. "You value traditions so highly, yet almost all pure-blood families take any squib born to them and cast it out. They deny their own children a family and a name, all in the name of tradition and purity of blood."

"Leave it to you to focus on something so ridiculous. Squib children have no place in our world. . ." Malfoy was stopped abruptly when Hermione broken in once more.

"I was told that pure-bloods value family above all and yet when a newborn fails to prove magical, it is cast out and forgotten. A practice, I might mention, which is still in effect among only the most primitive muggle tribes when the child is female, or not perfect. . . it is not, however, a custom practiced by civilized societies!"

Draco Malfoy shrugged. "This is tradition, it's worked for more than a thousand years. Who are you, an outsider, to question it?"

"I am the daughter of a squib. As such, I feel it is my right to question!" She huffed, then continued. "Has it never occurred to you that the blood a squib carries is the same as that in the veins of its parents and their other, magical children? Why blame a child for lack of magic when it was obviously the parents own imperfect blood that created it? That they are at fault for producing a child with no magic, not the child. Perhaps it is they who should be condemned and barred from reproducing again, to keep their obviously flawed bloodline from spreading!" Hermione's words fell into silence as the students and teachers sat stunned by her logic.

Malfoy stood before her, mouth open in shock.

"It looks to me that the pure-blood 'tradition' of getting rid of squib children is simply a way for them to hide their flawed and weakening blood lines!" She waited a moment for any rebuttal, then continued. "And, just so you know, a squib in a magical family is no different than a magical child popping up in a muggle family...two sides of the same coin!"

"And what if Oliver Twist is right? We need the infusions of new blood from muggle-borns and half-bloods to keep magic strong and alive."

With a stubborn tilt of his jaw Malfoy finally spoke. "Well, he can't be right. We would've seen the effect before now."

Hermione snarled. "Perhaps we already have! Of the three most powerful wizards in the world, two of them are half-bloods and only one a pure-blood!" Had anyone looked at the head table, they would have seen Filius Flitwick and Severus Snape struggling to contain their mirth. Unaware of her professors' reactions, Hermione blithely ranted on.

"So then, your answer to all of this is to just bury your head in the sand, maintain the status quo and ignore the problem, hoping it'll go away? Is that what you are telling me? Because, if it is, then you might as well dig that hole longer and deeper and save us the trouble of burying you when the time comes!"

Harry moved to sit with Neville and his friends. Now he understood why the teachers hadn't interfered. They were using this argument to prove a point. He wondered if the professors really understood that point. He glanced over at the Ravenclaw table. Many were listening and taking notes. No, they weren't about to join in, they might miss some important fact.

Harry noted that the twins were quietly conducting business as usual, taking bets and urging their Housemates to join the pool. They weren't having much luck though since the odds-on-favorite was Hermione.

"And don't forget our career discussion with our head of house. Professor McGonagall lied to all muggle-borns when she extolled the virtues of working and living in the Wizarding World," Hermione stated. "I can't believe that a witch of her caliber would so mislead her students unless she was under direct orders to do so. That is NOT the Gryffindor way."

A stunned gasp rippled through the hall as Hermione turned and strode proudly back to the Gryffindor table and her friends waiting there.

With a wide grin, Harry stood and applauded his friend's logic. The rest of the hall, save Slytherin, soon followed.

Minerva McGonagall was too shocked at the turn of the debate to sputter a denial.

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Croaker sighed as he put down the report he had been reading. The rumors were rumors no longer. The Dark Lord known as Lord Voldemort, was no more. The reports were very vague at the cause of death as no body had been found, only a rotted hand, a desiccated rib bone and a bloody robe.

He recalled Potter reporting after the last trial of the Tri-wizard Tournament that his blood, along with other things, had been used in a foul ritual that brought Riddle back to life. If he remembered correctly, the boy mentioned these elements were used.

Croaker picked up a list of names. 'We are looking at the death of our world if something isn't done and soon,' he thought. The list contained all of the Death Eaters that were now either dead or squibs.

Names from many of the most prominent pureblood families were listed. Some families had more than one member on the list. As it now stood a large number of the old, pure-blood families were without their Paterfamilias. Many also lost their mothers, heirs and other siblings. Voldemort's death had crippled the British Wizarding World's aristocracy.

'I can just see the Wizengamot enacting new marriage laws which will prove disastrous if they pass. With the eye of the crown already assessing our world, we stand to lose everything. Her Majesty will not be pleased if this happens.' Croaker thought for a moment before penning a quick note. He started to chuckle. 'Well, if they do, I can just see it now! Twist will have new fodder for his poison pen.'

Speaking of Oliver Twist, Croaker picked up another note.

Dear Unspeakables,

I wish to inform you as I know I can trust you to keep this quiet. Potter has come into his inheritances and claimed his rings. I saw them as he entered the Great Hall. He was even wearing the Slytherin ring!

No one was allowed to enter the infirmary the week he and Professor Snape were confined by the Dragon Lady for reasons unknown. It did, however, coincide with the strange happenings with the Death Eaters.

I must say Professor Snape is looking better and still has his magic, which makes me wonder how he was missed in the purge.

Look for my next article in the Prophet.

-OT

Croaker's eyebrows shot up. Potter-Gryffindor and Slytherin? Oh Merlin!

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In the Great Hall, Minerva McGonagall huffed indignantly over her best fifth year student's comments. Filius stopped her with a calming hand on her arm. "Don't Minerva. She's right. You know as well as I that Albus didn't want us to tell the truth. He had his own agenda and truth wasn't part of it."

"But . . ."

Filius shook his head. "She was only saying what everyone is thinking. You know as well as I do that we are losing the best and brightest half-bloods and the muggle-borns every year due to the injustice of the Ministry policies."

"I did not wish to discourage any student striving to achieve. And you well know I had no choice, I had to follow Albus' dictates on these matters."

Filius shook his head. "This has been building for years, if not decades. No. What we need to do is allow this to continue. . ." he held up his hand to stall her protest. "Let me finish. We need to allow this in a controlled environment."

"My little ravens have been debating these issues since Mr. Twist's articles began. I think it's time that we open this school wide. Let's do a round robin debate with teams, rules and judges. Don't you think it's time to return to teaching our students to use their minds to think, rather than to simply repeat empty words and phrases?"

Severus Snape stood. "I agree Minerva. You know Albus didn't like the students questioning him or what he saw as proper. He thought his way was the only way for the Greater Good."

Minerva closed her eyes in thought. "Very well then, I will let you and Filius oversee this."

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Harry crowed in delight. A school wide debate! He read the list of topics:

Pure-blood vs muggle-born magic: Is there a difference?

Birthrate within the Wizarding World: Why is it declining?

Squibs: Have their birthrates increased over the last century and can they be integrated into Wizarding society?

Careers within the British Wizarding World vs other Countries: Which offers career advancement for all?

Oliver Twist: How accurate are the facts he stated?

"Harry are you going to sign up for any of these debates?" Hermione asked excitedly.

"No, I don't have time, 'Mione," Harry said, turning to his friend. "What one are you going to sign up for?"

"One? All of them!"

Harry's eyebrow disappeared within his fringe. "Do you think that's wise? I know you Hermione. You should only pick one or two. You'll drop with exhaustion researching all of the topics and don't forget you still need to study for our OWLS."

Hermione huffed. "I can do this. Most of them overlap anyway."

Harry shook his head. "I still think you should pick only a couple and sit in on the rest. But it's your funeral."

On Monday morning, Harry walked down to the Great Hall for breakfast. His thoughts were on the debate held yesterday.

The professors had decided to set aside Sundays for debates. The first one, between Ravenclaw and Slytherin, had been interesting to listen to. As it was the first, there had not been time for much research to be done. It lasted for two hours, until Professor Flitwick had called it a draw.

Hermione had ignored his advice as usual and tried to get on many of the teams only to be rebuffed. She did manage to get on two and both were made up with Gryffindors. Her first debate was coming up next week.

"Harry?"

Harry turned around to see Luna standing in a small alcove. "Nice article in the Quibbler today. When are you going to tell anyone. . .?"

"Shh. . . not here," Harry said, nervously looking around, before grabbing and pulling her further into the alcove. A quick silencing charm, and Harry looked at his friend with a sigh.

"It isn't easy, Luna. I really don't have plans to reveal Oliver's true identity. I know several people have figured it out, but they haven't said anything. Are you going. . .?"

Luna gave him a dreamy smile. "Why should I? Who would believe me?"

Harry laughed and hugged his strange friend. "Thanks Luna. I have plans for Oliver and seriously, I need him to be kept a secret from most of the Wizarding World. Those that have figured it out are those that see the real Harry and not the Boy Who Lived."

"The nargles seem to agree with you Harry. I'll keep your secrets as well."

"Thanks Luna."

Inside the Great hall, Harry picked up a copy of the Quibbler and read the newest Twist article.

Life Can be Funny

You know, life has a way of throwing you for a loop, sometimes two or three.

Take for example, the heated argument between Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy during dinner last week. One would think that the

professors would be breaking it up as soon as it started. However, in a move very much like our former headmaster, who I am told is on 'stress leave' until further notice, the shouting match was allowed to continue as no hexes were thrown. I firmly believe had there been, the professors would've stepped in.

Although, Miss Granger did bring up one point that does remain worth repeating. "Professor McGonagall lied to us muggle-born when she extolled the virtues of working and living in the Wizarding World," Hermione Granger stated. "I can't believe that a witch of her caliber would so mislead her students unless she was under direct orders to do so. That is NOT the Gryffindor way."

Doesn't the Wizarding World have a back bone yet?

On another note, I am hearing rumblings from the Wizengamot about new and upcoming marriage laws to help with the shortages caused the war of pure-blood lines. Uh excuse me? Didn't we just go through this when Her Majesty came for a visit?

The directive she has issued to everyone was to bring the Wizarding Laws back to British standards set by parliament. She will no longer tolerate any Wizarding laws that discriminate against any race of sentient beings, or those which violate the Laws of the Realm. So, mandatory marriage laws would be considered illegal and a form of marital slavery and would add another nail in the coffin of the Wizengamot.

Wouldn't it be better to offer incentives, such as tax relief for families who have more than one child? How about sponsorships/scholarships to Hogwarts for families with more than two children in attendance? What if squib children were kept and encouraged to marry within the Wizarding world, after all, they do come from proven bloodlines.

Why pass such asinine laws that force people to go against their own free will when the best way is to offer rewards if they comply to the needs of the whole? This makes more sense to me, but then the Wizarding World, as a whole, just refuses to think for themselves. They would seem to rather allow a few to make decisions for them, then complaint about it when things don't go the way they should.

Thankfully, I'm still in Hogwarts getting my education. As for the betting pool that the Weasley twins are still running, well, I am still enjoying everyone's thoughts on who they think I am.

I rather like being in the background, always watching, always pointing out the missteps. Those who have figured it out, please keep my secrets as I am keeping yours. Your silence will allow me to continue to be a voice of reason in an insane world.

-Oliver Twist

-finis -

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As you all can see this is the last chapter. We hope we tied up all the loose ends. There will not be an epilogue or a sequel. What you see is what you get. It's been a fun ride and we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did. It was never our intention to reveal who Oliver really was to the Wizarding World. We are sorry for those that had wished to see the reaction this would have caused, but he really served better as the anonymous conscience of the Wizarding World. For those that wrote that they couldn't wait for this scene, we really couldn't write back as it would've given away our story plot.

We are sorry for the terrible delay in getting this out. Life took off for us. As many are aware, Frau and I sew during the spring and summer months for our hobby turned business of making and selling renaissance costumes. Our sewing machines held us hostage and refused to let us go.

Also, Frau and I tried and in some cases failed to answer all your comments, questions, flames, etc. We do however, thank each and every reviewer. We appreciated all of you, especially those (like Alorkin) who faithfully not only reviewed but entertained us with pithy and amusing comments. We loved those!

Until next time – GenkaiFan and the Frau

Poison Pen

GenkaiFan's and Frau's Notes

I am doing this solo as Frau is currently dealing with health issues and can't make it to the keyboard. Hopefully, she will get better soon. So please excuse the grammar errors.

As we have said in the his chapter, there were be no sequel, well, at least from us. We've decided to allow others to do it for us. We know we can't stop anyone from doing a sequel or a spin-off as this is after all fanfiction.

However, we would to offer up this challenge if you are thinking about doing a story based on "Poison Pen."

The Poison Pen Challenge

1. Oliver Twist is not revealed as Harry Potter officially. We had in mind at one time doing a sequel and had discussed that Harry would love to be able to live under the alias of Twist to get away from his BWL fans. It is alright for people to know who he is as long as they keep it to themselves. All loose threads within Poison Pen are fair game. Have at it!

2. We would like to see no pairings. We felt that the story was all about the articles and not Harry's love life. However, if you want to do a pairing, we wouldn't stop you. All we ask is no Ginny pairings. Slash is alright as long as it's not too graphic and moves the story along. Sometimes, authors get too carried away writing sex scenes that the story gets bogged down.

3. Lastly, let us know you are writing it so we can post the address on Genkai's profile.

4. Have fun.

We look forward to reading what you write. As for us, we are taking a from writing Harry Potter and going to rework a couple stories GenkaiFan wrote before Frau became her partner-in-crime.

Until next time. -GF and the Frau